
THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

C270
417

NOTES,

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL,

UPON THE

INTERNATIONAL

SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS

FOR THE YEAR 1876.

BY

REV. RUFUS W. CLARK, D.D.

11
B.82



NEW YORK:
DODD & MEAD, PUBLISHERS,
751 Broadway.

1875

THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS
WASHINGTON

BV1560
C55

COPYRIGHT.
DODD & MEAD,
1875.

FRANKLIN PRESS:
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY
RAND, AVERY, & CO.

PREFACE.

THE design of these Notes is to present an accurate, clear, and condensed exposition of the International Sabbath-school Lessons for the year 1876. The latest and best works on biblical literature have been consulted; and results are given, rather than the various opinions and discussions of scholars, which, for no other reason, would occupy too much space in a volume of this character. The commentaries and works that have been the most freely used are those of Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Lange, Jacobus, A. Clarke, Henry, Peirce, Hackett, Kitto, and Robinson.

This volume is sent forth with the hope and prayer, that it may greatly aid both teachers and scholars in the study of the rich and important portions of God's Holy Word, selected by the International Committee. As the Notes embrace the whole year, they afford facilities for reviewing the topics gone over, and fastening them in the memory, as well as retaining their influence over the heart and the life.

In cases where a full understanding of the subject of the lesson requires a knowledge of events that precede the portion of Scrip-

ture that is assigned for the class, or are intimately connected with it, these are presented and explained. It is interesting and profitable for the student to become as familiar as possible with what precedes and follows the lessons; and the excellent commentaries that are within the reach of many afford abundant facilities for this. Better than all, for a clear understanding of the Holy Scriptures, is the prayer offered in faith, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

CONTENTS.

FIRST QUARTER.

LESSON.		PAGE.
I.	Saul rejected. 1 Sam. xv. 10-23	7
II.	David anointed King. 1 Sam. xvi. 1-13	11
III.	David and Goliath. 1 Sam. xvii. 38-51	14
IV.	David in the Palace. 1 Sam. xviii. 1-16	17
V.	David and Jonathan. 1 Sam. xx. 35-42	20
VI.	David sparing Saul. 1 Sam. xxiv. 1-16	23
VII.	Saul and his Sons slain. 1 Sam. xxxi. 1-6	26
VIII.	David established King. 2 Sam. v. 17-25	29
IX.	The Ark brought to Zion. 2 Sam. vi. 1-15	32
X.	God's Covenant with David. 2 Sam. vii. 18-29	36
XI.	Absalom's Rebellion. 2 Sam. xv. 1-14	39
XII.	Absalom's Death. 2 Sam. xviii. 24-33	42

SECOND QUARTER.

I.	The Ascending Lord. Acts ii. 1-12	45
II.	The Day of Pentecost. Acts ii. 1-11	50
III.	Peter's Defence. Acts ii. 12-28	55
IV.	The Early Christian Church. Acts ii. 37-47	61
V.	The Lame Man healed. Acts iii. 1-11	65
VI.	The Power of Jesus' Name. Acts iii. 12-26	68
VII.	Christian Courage. Acts iv. 8-22	73
VIII.	Christian Fellowship. Acts iv. 23-37	77
IX.	Lying unto God. Acts v. 1-11	81
X.	The Apostles in Prison. Acts v. 12-26	85
XI.	The Apostles before the Council. Acts v. 27-42	89
XII.	The Seven Chosen. Acts vi. 1-15	93

THIRD QUARTER.

LESSON.		PAGE.
I.	David's Charge to Solomon. 1 Chron. xxviii. 1-10	97
II.	Solomon's Choice. 2 Chron. i. 1-17	100
III.	Solomon's Temple. 2 Chron. iii. 1-17	103
IV.	The Temple dedicated. 1 Kings viii. 5-21	107
V.	Solomon's Prayer. 1 Kings viii. 22-30	110
VI.	Solomon's Prosperity. 1 Kings x. 1-10	112
VII.	The Call of Wisdom. Prov. i. 20-33	116
VIII.	The Value of Wisdom. Prov. iii. 1-19	119
IX.	Honest Industry. Prov. vi. 6-22	122
X.	Intemperance. Prov. xxiii. 29-35	125
XI.	The Excellent Woman. Prov. xxxi. 10-31	127
XII.	A Godly Life. Eccles. xii. 1-14	130

FOURTH QUARTER.

I.	Stephen's Defence. Acts vii. 1-19	133
II.	Stephen's Defence. Acts vii. 35-50	138
III.	Stephen's Martyrdom. Acts vii. 51-60	143
IV.	Simon the Sorcerer. Acts viii. 9-25	147
V.	Philip and the Ethiopian. Acts viii. 26-40	152
VI.	Saul's Conversion. Acts ix. 1-13	156
VII.	Saul's Early Ministry. Acts ix. 19-30	161
VIII.	Dorcas restored to Life. Acts ix. 31-43	163
IX.	Peter's Vision. Acts x. 1-20	166
X.	The Gentiles received. Acts x. 34-48	169
XI.	Spread of the Gospel. Acts xi. 19-30	172
XII.	Peter's Release. Acts xii. 1-17	175

FIRST QUARTER.

LESSONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LESSON I. — January 2, 1876.

SAUL REJECTED. — 1 SAM. XV. 10–23.

10. ¶ Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying,
11. It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the Lord all night.
12. And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.
13. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed *be* thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.
14. And Samuel said, What *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?
15. And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.
16. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.
17. And Samuel said, When thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?
18. And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them, until they be consumed.
19. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?
20. And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.
21. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.
22. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.
23. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

The subject of the closing lesson from the Old Testament, last year, was the advice and warning addressed by Samuel to the people and king of Israel. Had they heeded his words, and followed his pious example, all would have been well with Saul and the nation. But their disobedience brought upon them the calamities with which this lesson opens.

Samuel. — It is well to refresh our minds with a brief history of Samuel, the celebrated Hebrew prophet and judge. He was by birth a Levite, the son of Elkanah and Hannah. He was a child of prayer, and his name signifies "God hath heard." At a very early age he was taken to Shiloh, and grew up beside the tabernacle, under the care of Eli the high priest. While a youth, he received divine communications; and his life was a beautiful illustration of early consecration and devotion to God.

After the death of Eli, he became the acknowledged judge of Israel; and by his wisdom, integrity, and high religious character, won the confidence and reverence of the people. Finding them in a low condition morally and politically, he elevated them to a higher state of civilization and prosperity. He freed them from foreign yokes, united the twelve tribes, promoted education and the worship of God, and administered justice with firmness and impartiality. He established "the schools of the prophets," which were for a long time very useful. During his whole life he exerted a most beneficial influence upon the nation and upon Saul. He died 1053 B. C., at the age of ninety-eight, beloved and honored by all.

Saul. — Our lesson presents to us the fall of a man who had every opportunity to become a happy and illustrious king. He was selected by God, out of the tribe of Benjamin, and anointed by Samuel 1091 B. C. He was a man of commanding appearance, full of vigor and courage, and, early in his reign, received special tokens of the divine favor. Although God disapproved of the call of the people for a king, as it indicated a sad want of faith in him, and ingratitude towards Samuel, whose administration had been so eminently successful, still he was ready to accede to their wishes; and, if now the king and people would obey his commands, he would secure to them uninterrupted prosperity. But Saul soon fell into a course of disobedience, and displayed traits of character that foreshadowed a disastrous reign. He failed to recognize the fact that God was still king of Israel; that he was simply his lieutenant, appointed to execute the divine laws. After a battle with the Philistines, he ordered a sacrifice to be made to God without waiting for the arrival of Samuel. At that time Samuel said to him, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God."

Other sins and misfortunes followed, which terminated in his rejection as king, and finally in his self-destruction.

Lesson, *Ver.* 10. *Came the word of the Lord.* — In what manner the Lord made known his will to Samuel, we are not informed. The Creator of the human mind knows all the avenues to it, and can communicate with it through mental impressions, or an audible voice, or in any other way he may choose.

Ver. 11. *It repenteth me.* — When God says, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king," we understand, that, as Saul had changed in his conduct, the Lord had changed in his purpose towards him. Had Saul continued to obey God's commands, the kingdom would have been established in his family; but he repeatedly disobeyed; and God's unchangeable nature prompted him to deal accordingly with the king. The reason God gives is, "for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments."

In other instances given of God's repenting, — as, Gen. vi. 6, 7, and 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, — we perceive a change in his conduct or purposes towards others. The change may be produced by different causes; but in all of them God is consistent with himself. He is governed by principles that are unchangeable.

VER. 12. *Carmel.* — A city in the south of Palestine, on a mountain bearing the same name. Here Nabal the Carmelite, Abigail's husband, dwelt; and, according to Jerome, the Romans had a garrison there in his time. Mount Carmel, that the prophets Elijah and Elisha often visited, is celebrated for its vineyards and gardens, its crystal brooks, variegated scenery, and the enchanting views that are seen from its summit.

He set him up a place. — Saul erected a trophy of his victory. Some say that it was a monument; others, a triumphal arch; others, a building, in the form of a hand, to signify that they overcame the Amalekites with a strong hand. The Hebrew word translated "place" literally means "a hand;" and probably the memorial of the victory was in the form of a colossal hand of stone, wood, or other durable material. Many such forms of the human hand exist among the monuments of ancient Egypt. *Niebuhr* says, in his description of Ali's mosque at Mesched Ali, that surmounting the dome, instead of a crescent, there is a hand extended to represent that of Ali. The same symbol is on the top of the Alhambra, the palace of the Moorish kings of Grenada. The erection of this vain-glorious trophy was an additional act of disobedience." — *Jamieson.*

Is gone about, and passed on. — Moving in a pompous procession, as a mighty conqueror, to gratify his pride, may be the meaning of this passage.

Gilgal. — A celebrated place between the River Jordan and the city of Jericho, where the Israelites first encamped after the passage of that river, and where they set up the twelve stones brought from the river's bed. Here they were circumcised, and kept the first passover in Canaan. A permanent military camp was established by Joshua while he was engaged in subduing the land. For centuries it was the great gathering-place of the tribes; and here the tabernacle rested until it was moved to Shiloh. Here Saul was crowned.

VERS. 13, 14. *And Samuel came to Saul*, &c. — It is difficult to determine from this language the feelings of Saul in meeting Samuel. He may have expected the congratulations and commendation of the prophet for his course of conduct and success. Or, conscious of having done wrong, he may have sought, by his respectful address to Samuel, to conciliate his good-will, and avert any evil consequences. But Samuel, without stopping to exchange salutations even with a king, directs his attention to the proofs of his disobedience.

VER. 15. *The people spared the best of the sheep.* — If Saul was the commander of the people, they could not have done this without his authority or sanction. This excuse therefore fails him.

VERS. 16–19. *Then Samuel said unto Saul*, &c. — The wisdom of Samuel is very apparent in the manner in which he puts this case before the king. He desires that Saul may himself see his conduct in its true light, — see his own ingratitude and folly in disobeying God, who had taken him from a humble condition, and elevated him to the honorable position of king over Israel. Instead of obeying the divine

command, and destroying "the sinners the Amalekites," the prophet says to him, "Wherefore didst thou fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?" Was the spoil more to thee than the approbation of Jehovah? Were oxen and sheep to be set against the terrible consequences of evil done in the very sight of the Lord?

VERS. 20, 21. *And Saul said to Samuel*, &c. — While Saul takes to himself the credit of the victory over the Amalekites, he lays the blame of sparing the oxen and sheep upon the people. Or, if his object is to excuse them, it is not so clear that they were all reserved to sacrifice to the Lord. There is certainly the appearance of covetousness underlying the whole transaction. It is not usual for men to be influenced by religious motives when disobeying the direct commands of God.

VER. 22. *And Samuel said*, &c. — At a single stroke Samuel demolishes the profferred excuse of the king He breaks in pieces the shell, and reveals the substance of religion. He appeals to the reason and judgment of Saul himself: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" What is the end of religious rites and sacrifices but to secure obedience to the will of God?

VER. 23. *Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.* — The judge sums up the case in a very brief manner, and pronounces the verdict. We may see in this interview the qualities of Samuel as a judge: his clear apprehension of the chief points in the case, his sound common-sense, his impartial justice, his absolute adherence to the line of right, and the recognized supremacy of his relations and duties to God over all other interests. The rebellion and stubbornness of the king are classed with the sins of witchcraft and idolatry, and deserve the punishment due to them. "Assuming," says Jamieson, "there was teraphim in Saul's family (ch. xix. 13), and that Saul knew it, these words have a point and significance that must have been deeply felt."

He hath also rejected thee from being king. — Saul having rejected God, the kingdom is taken away from his family, though he continues upon the throne till his death.

LESSON II. — JANUARY 9.

DAVID ANOINTED KING. — 1 SAM. xvi. 1–13.

1. And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear *it*, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord.

3. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee.

4. And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Beth-lehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5. And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6. ¶ And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed *is* before him.

7 But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the Lord seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

8. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

9. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

10. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these.

11. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.

13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

Although the government of Israel was changed by the introduction of kings, still Samuel remained in power as God's prophet. He also exerted a wide and beneficial influence over the whole people. As the medium between the heavenly King, and the people of Israel, he is now called to another important duty.

VER. 1. *How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?* — While Samuel most rigidly obeyed God's commands, he still entertained a deep interest in the welfare of Saul. His friendship for him was sincere, generous, and constant. He had, doubtless, earnestly prayed for his forgiveness and restitution. But as God had decreed to take from him the kingdom of Israel, and give it to another, it was not proper that Samuel should allow his private feelings to interfere with his public duties as a prophet. The welfare of the nation required the early designation of one to fill the throne, as the sudden death of Saul might be productive of disturbances and disastrous consequences.

Fill thine horn with oil. — Among the ancient nations, horns were generally used as drinking-vessels, and to hold ointments, perfumes, &c. Samuel was commanded to fill his with oil, for the purpose of anointing a new king.

I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite. — "The genealogy of Jesse is traced to Boaz (Ruth iv. 18–21). But the object was merely to prove that he was a link in the Messianic chain of descent; and it is left quite unknown, whether Jesse was the eldest of Obed and Boaz's family, the heir of that wealthy proprietor, or the youngest son. That he was comparatively a poor man, has been inferred from his having a small flock under the care of one shepherd only, his youngest son. At the same time, he seems to have been a man of note in the village, esteemed for his piety and general worth of character." — *Jamieson.*

I have provided me a king. — Before, the people had a man of their choice, although selected by the prophet, whose external qualities commended him to public favor, and who was given to them in response to their sinful desires. Now God designates one after his own heart, selecting him from the most highly honored tribe (Gen. xlix. 10.)

VER. 2. *Say, I am come to sacrifice.* — As all the ritual laws were subject to the prophets, Samuel could sacrifice anywhere; and, while it was true that he did offer a sacrifice, it was not necessary to mention the chief object of his journey, especially as information on that point might defeat it. Besides, through this measure, the elders, and Jesse and his sons, were called together; and thus the selection of the new king was accomplished. The truth is to be told at all times, as it was in this case. One is not obliged, under all circumstances, to tell the whole truth; though he must state only the truth.

VER. 4. *The elders of the town trembled at his coming.* — Though they probably went out to meet him, yet they feared, lest, as God's prophet, Samuel had come to announce the judgments of heaven on account of the sins of the people. "The inhabitants of this place have long been proverbial for their refractory spirit; and even in modern times they have been often at variance with the reigning powers."

VER. 5. *Sanctify yourselves.* — To sanctify, signifies, to consecrate, or set apart from a secular to a religious use. Here it means, to change their raiment, cleanse their bodies, and prepare their minds, by meditation and prayer, to offer an acceptable sacrifice to God.

VER. 6. *When they were come,* — to the feast that followed the sacrifice. In all cases, except in the whole burnt offering, it was customary to pour out the blood of the victim to God, burn the fat, and then feast on the flesh. At this time, before sitting down to the feast, Samuel doubtless communicated to Jesse the commission he had received from the Lord; and arrangements were made to have his sons called before him.

VERS. 6, 7. *Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.* — Although Samuel knew that he must be guided in his selection by directions from God, still he is so impressed with the external appearance and apparent qualifications of Eliab, that he decides at once in his favor. But his error is soon corrected by Him "who looketh on the heart." What an impressive lesson we have here, upon the small value of mere external advantages, and the infinite importance of having the heart right in the sight of a holy God! What honors, what far-reaching influences, await the son, in this family, whose heart God can view with approbation!

VERS. 8–10. *Seven of his sons.* — Seven called, and no one of them chosen! Many are called to be kings and priests unto God, who, on account of some moral defect, are not chosen.

VER. 11. *He keepeth the sheep.* — The youngest, then about fifteen years old, was not at home. How unconscious he was of what was going on, or of the destiny that awaited him!

VER. 12. *He was ruddy.* — He had golden locks, or his hair was red; which, in ancient times, was accounted beautiful. His countenance and demeanor indicated the sweetness of his disposition, and the purity of his heart.

VER. 13. *Anointed him.* — David was not at this time vested with kingly authority; but the anointing was a designation of him to succeed Saul.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon David. — God qualified him for the high and responsible position before him, by giving him wisdom, courage, prudence, and magnanimity. While tending his sheep, God prepared him to be an illustrious ruler of his people.

Ramah. — A city on Mount Ephraim, the place of Samuel's birth, residence, and burial. It is considered by some as identical with Arimathea of the New Testament. There are several cities of this name.

LESSON III. — January 16.

David and Goliath. — 1 Sam. xvii. 38–51.

38. And Saul armed David with his armor, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

39. And David girded his sword upon his armor, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved *it*. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*. And David put them off him.

40. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

41. And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield *went* before him.

42. And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was *but* a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

43. And the Philistine said unto David, *Am* I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

45. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

47. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle *is* the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.

48. And it came to pass when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no sword in the hand of David.

51. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

Although David had been anointed king, and Samuel had announced to Saul that God had rejected him as king, still Saul continued the ruler of Israel until his death. He was rejected as the founder of a royal dynasty; and, in this sense, the kingdom was taken from him.

After the Spirit of the Lord had been given to David, it departed from Saul; and, left to himself, he was greatly troubled. The youthful David ministered to him with his harp, and refreshed his agitated and weary spirit.

An opportunity occurs that brings out the military qualities of this attractive, skilful, and noble youth, at this time a great favorite with Saul. With the Philistines, Saul had been continually at war. This celebrated people, who inhabited the southern seacoast of Canaan, were powerful in the time of Abraham (1900 B.C.), and had their kings, and cities of considerable size. Though they were not included among the nations of Canaan, devoted to extermination, still Joshua attacked them by the command of the Lord. They continued, however, strong, under their kings and lords, in the times of the judges,

during the reign of Saul, and at the beginning of the reign of David. Victories were gained over them with great slaughter, by Shamgar, Samson, Samuel, and Saul; but it was reserved for David to destroy their independence, and bring them into subjection to the kings of Judah. His first encounter with them is presented to us in this lesson.

The Philistines had gathered their forces between Shochoh and Azekah, which lay about five leagues south of Jerusalem, and to the west of Bethlehem. Not far from them, the men of Israel pitched by the valley of Elah. A challenge is sent forth by Goliath, which David accepts. This scene reveals the moral qualities that have rendered the name of David illustrious and immortal.

VER. 38. *Saul armed David.* — Saul has been accustomed to put his trust in armor; and David, though putting his trust in the Lord, is ready to employ all the natural means to secure success.

VER. 39. *I have not proved them.* — It required much training for a person to use such heavy armor with skill; and, to one not accustomed to it, it would only be an encumbrance. David, therefore, lays it aside, saying, "I cannot go with these."

VER. 40. *He took his staff,* — his shepherd's crook, also five smooth stones in a shepherd's bag which he had, and a sling. These weapons seem very simple, especially in contrast with the massive armor of his antagonist. But among ancient nations the sling was really a powerful offensive weapon. Livy and others speak of slingers who could hit a mark at a very great distance, particularly the Phœnicians, to whom the invention of the sling is ascribed; and the Balleares, or inhabitants of the islands of Majorca and Minorca. The latter had three slings of different lengths, to reach different distances. Stones could be thrown four hundred feet, and leaden bullets six hundred feet.

The Greeks, Persians, and Hebrews used this weapon with remarkable force and precision; and David was certainly an expert marksman. He had an advantage over Goliath of which the giant was not aware; and his promptness in using it enabled him to strike the first blow, before any of the powerful weapons of his adversary could be used.

He drew near to the Philistine. — Thus he manifested his personal courage, and his strong faith in God.

VER. 42. *The Philistine disdained him.* — He saw before him a fair, and apparently effeminate youth, without any armor; and he held in contempt such a foe.

VER. 43. *Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?* — We need not be surprised at the giant's indignation when his eye caught the shepherd's crook, without probably seeing the sling that might have been coiled up in David's hand.

The Philistine cursed David by his gods. — He invoked the curses of his gods upon him. Such a parley as this was quite in keeping with the military custom of the times. Combatants, like the heroes of Homer, would indulge in bitter invective, and sometimes in angry discussions, before coming to blows.

VER. 44. *I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air.* — You are a foe so weak and contemptible, that, if you come to me, I will at once tear you in pieces, and fling your flesh to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field. Your destruction will be instantaneous and complete.

Ver. 45–47. *Thou comest to me with a sword*, &c. — Nothing can exceed the humility, courage, and faith in God, displayed in this sublime speech. The whole scene is one of the most thrilling and instructive to be found in the Scriptural records. The hosts of two armies are looking with intense interest upon the forms of two men approaching each other for deadly conflict. It is morally certain that one must die. It seems certain that the youth of twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, with no visible armor, must soon be despatched by the heavily-armed giant. David is fully apprised of the circumstances that surround him, and of the momentous responsibilities and consequences of the step he has taken. There are no signs of rashness or self-seeking in his movements. The principle that sustains and inspires him is trust in God. Against the sword and spear and shield of the confident and haughty Philistine, he places simply his coming in the name of the Lord of hosts. He has here a triple assurance of victory. First, coming in the name of the Lord, is coming in his power. Second, he comes in the name or power of the God of the armies of Israel. He knows that the Protector of these armies will protect him. Third, the God "whom thou hast defied:" God will vindicate himself against the indignity cast upon his holy and omnipotent name. So certain is David of success, that, in this opening speech, he ascribes the glory of the achievement to God. "The battle is the Lord's," and he will conquer; "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

Ver. 49. *Smote the Philistine in his forehead.* — While the body of Goliath was protected by heavy armor, his face may have been exposed, as ancient helmets do not appear to have had any covering for the face. Some writers suppose that the helmet did cover the forehead; and that the stone passed through it, and sank into the forehead. This is not improbable, when we consider the great force with which stones and bullets were flung from the sling. It is said that the Balleares, in time of war, when attacking fortified towns, "grievously wound the besieged; and break in pieces the shields, helmets, and every species of armor by which the body is defended. They are such exact marksmen, that they scarcely ever miss that at which they aim." This perfection is attained by constant practice from childhood, — the mother often putting a piece of bread at the top of a pole, and the child made to fast until he hit it; when it was given to him to eat.

It has been said, that the stone from David's sling was directed by a divine hand. While it is true that God directs all events, we do not deem it necessary to regard this, as coming under the head of the supernatural or miraculous.

Ver. 51. *And took his sword . . . and slew him.* — Though the stone stunned and prostrated Goliath, life may not have been extinct when David stood upon him. Therefore he drew the giant's sword, and despatched him with his own weapon.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. — Panic-struck, they rushed hastily from the field. Powerful as the Philistines were, with the consciousness of past success, they could not stand for a moment against the God of Israel. The men of Israel and of Judah seized the advantage thus afforded them, and obtained over the enemy a complete victory.

LESSON IV. — January 23.

David in the Palace. — 1 Sam. xviii. 1–16.

1. And it came to pass, when he made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
2. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.
3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.
4. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.
5. ¶ And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.
6. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.
7. And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.
8. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him, and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more, but the kingdom?
9. And Saul eyed David from that day, and forward.
10. ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand.
11. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.
12. ¶ And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul.
13. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.
14. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord *was* with him.
15. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.
16. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

Ver. 1. Jonathan was the eldest son of Saul, and one of the loveliest characters presented in the Old Testament. The friendship between him and David was pure, ardent, and constant. It was awakened by David's heroism, modesty, piety, and manly virtues. It is remarkable when we consider that Jonathan was aware of the fact that David had been anointed king, and that thus he was excluded from the throne.

Ver. 2. David is received into the palace, apparently under the favor of the king.

Ver. 3. *Covenant.* — A contract by which they bound themselves to a mutual and lasting friendship. Such covenants of brotherhood are common in the East.

Ver. 4. *Jonathan stripped himself.* — In Eastern countries it is customary to make presents of robes and clothing, as tokens of respect and friendship. Among warriors arms are given, as well as clothing. In this case, the numerous gifts of Jonathan, including his sword, bow, and girdle, as well as his robe and garments, show how great are the honors he desires to confer upon David.

Ver. 5. *David behaved himself wisely.* — His position was certainly

one that required great discretion, and it appears that his caution and prudence were equal to his courage. Before the king, with Jonathan the heir apparent of the throne, and mingling with the people, he acted with the greatest wisdom.

Saul set him over the men of war, made him field-marshal. As a military commander, he was universally popular. Abner was chief in command.

VER. 6. *When David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine.* — The first five verses of this chapter are omitted in the Septuagint; and this verse properly follows the close of the preceding chapter, making an unbroken narrative.

Women came out of all cities. — It was the professional business of certain women to celebrate victories by singing and playing upon musical instruments, while marching in triumphal procession. The victory of David was an occasion of general rejoicing, and was naturally celebrated with great enthusiasm; though it was indiscreet to bestow such praise upon a subject, at the expense of the sovereign.

VER. 7. *David his tens of thousands.* — By slaying Goliath he had caused the flight of the hosts of the Philistines, and great slaughter. Saul had been victorious in his battles; but David had confronted larger numbers, and his success was the more conspicuous.

VER. 9. *Saul eyed David.* — He viewed him with a jealous eye, because of the praises bestowed upon him. He feared that David might be disposed to make himself at once a king.

VER. 10. *The evil spirit from God came upon Saul.* — God permitted an evil spirit to come to him. "Whether this was a diabolic possession, or a mere mental malady, the learned are not agreed; it seems to have partaken of both. That Saul had fallen into a deep melancholy, there is little doubt; that the Devil might work more effectually upon such a state of mind, there can be but little question."

He prophesied in the midst of the house. — Under the influence of the evil spirit within him, he uttered incoherent imprecations, or a sort of demoniacal predictions. He may have pretended to have been praying, or to have been under strong religious emotions, to conceal his purpose to murder David. The exact meaning of the words it is difficult to reach.

VER. 11. *Saul cast the javelin.* — The javelin, or spear, being the emblem of regal authority, a king always had one at hand. On ancient monuments they are represented with one. As spears were the emblems of supreme power, they were, in the minds of the people, associated with divinity, and were worshipped as representing the gods.

The power of jealousy is seen in Saul's purpose to kill David in the presence of his courtiers, and while David was serving him.

VER. 13. *Made him his captain.* — Saul pretended to honor him, while, in fact, he wished to get rid of the object of his hatred and envy. He may have hoped that David would be killed in some expedition, or that he might have him privately murdered. Saul seems to have utterly forgotten his God, and is under the fatal delusion that the destruction of his divinely appointed successor will benefit him.

VER. 14. *David behaved himself wisely in all his ways.* — He had the wisdom to conduct himself with discretion in all the relations, circumstances, and emergencies of life; certainly a rare gift.

VER. 15. *He was afraid of him.* — Saul feared a man whose mind was so well balanced, who was so true to duty amid the various temptations and trials that surrounded him, and who was so evidently under the protection and guidance of the Almighty.

VER. 16. *Because he went out and came in before them.* — The meaning, as in other similar passages, is, that he ruled, and managed affairs, with such success that all the people loved him.

LESSON V. — January 30.

David and Jonathan. — 1 Sam. xx. 35–42.

35. ¶ And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field, at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

36. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. *And* as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

37. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?

38. And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

39. But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

40. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city.

41. ¶ *And* as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a place* toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

42. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying: The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

Nowhere do we find the elements of true friendship more forcibly and beautifully brought out than in the feelings that Jonathan entertained towards David. The more David is persecuted by the cruel and relentless king, the warmer is Jonathan's affection for him. The contrast between the father and the son is most marked; and we scarcely know which is more remarkable, the intensity of Saul's envy, or the utter absence of it from the mind of Jonathan. If either could, in any degree, be justified in entertaining this feeling, it would certainly be Jonathan, the heir-apparent to the throne; for the crowning of David dissipates all his hopes of royalty, and takes from him a kingdom that would have been his, but for the disobedience, pride, and folly of his father. Still we discover, burning in his soul, nothing but the pure flame of love for David. Contemplating his own character, he might, without impropriety, have noticed qualities, conspicuous to others, that would have made him a good and successful king. But we discover in his conduct nothing for himself, but every thing for David. His courage, his forethought, his wisdom in planning, are all employed in the interests of his friend.

In the realm of friendship, we hail him king, and all the world bow to his royalty in this department. If he lost one crown, he gained another that is immortal. To-day the golden sceptre in his hand, and the beautiful features of his friendship, are recognized by hundreds of thousands of youth throughout Christendom; and a new wave of his benign influence rolls over the earth.

To fully understand the lesson, we need to glance, at least, over the entire chapter. It opens (1 Sam. xx. 1–4) with new proofs of Jonathan's love. His position in the court gives him advantages in knowing the feelings of his father, and giving warning to David, that he is ready to use to the utmost extent.

David, in order to preserve his life, finds it necessary to hide himself from the king. A plan is formed (1 Sam. xx. 18–22) by which Jona-

than is to communicate with David, and let him know whether it will be safe for him to return to the palace.

Among the evidences that Jonathan knew that the Lord had appointed David to the kingdom, is the expression in the 13th verse, "The Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father."

On the second day of the month (ver. 27) David is missed from the king's table, and inquiries are made for him. Jonathan informs his father that he asked leave to go to Bethlehem, to a family sacrifice. Saul, in his rage (ver. 30), pours forth upon Jonathan a volley of bitter denunciation mingled with the meanest sarcasm. He makes a revelation of his own weakness and malevolence that is disgusting to all around him.

"Saul," says one, "was not angry with his wife: it was the son alone upon whom he meant, by this style of address, to discharge his resentment; and the principle upon which it is founded seems to be, that, to genuine filial instinct, it is a more inexpiable offence to hear the name or character of a parent traduced than any personal reproach. In every Eastern family, the great object of respect and devotion is the mother. There are familiar expressions that show this very strongly. 'Pull my father's beard, but do not speak ill of my mother.' 'Strike me, but do not curse my mother.' This was, undoubtedly, one cause of the 'fierce anger' (ver. 34) in which the high-minded prince left the table without tasting a morsel."

VER. 35. *Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed.* It had been arranged that David should hide himself "by the stone Ezel (ver. 19) when the business was in hand;" that is, when the sign fixed upon was given. For three days he was to tarry with his family at Bethlehem, or wherever he found it convenient. Near this stone he was to conceal himself in some cave or hiding-place.

VERS. 36–38. *He shot an arrow beyond him.* It had been arranged, that, if the arrow was shot beyond the lad, this was to indicate the displeasure of the king, and the consequent danger to David. The cries of Jonathan to the lad were designed for the ear of David. There was danger, and he must flee.

VER. 40. *Gave him his artillery;* i. e., "his missile weapons. The French word 'artillerie' signifies archery; and the term is still used in England, in the designation of 'the Artillery Company of London,' the association of archers, though they have long disused bows and arrows." — *Jamieson.*

VER. 40. *Bowed himself three times.* A token of homage from David to the prince's rank.

Kissed one another, and wept. Their affection was never more pure and ardent than at this critical hour.

David exceeded. His distress was the greatest, because, besides parting from his friend Jonathan, he must leave his family, the people of God, and the ordinances of religion.

VER. 42. *Go in peace.* These two souls were united by the noblest sentiments, the warmest sympathies, and especially by love and reverence for God. They desire that their friendship may be cemented by divine influences, and transmitted to their posterity.

He arose and departed. David wisely determined to flee from the storm, rather than to face it. Such was his popularity, that he could easily have raised forces with which to resist Saul, and put an end to

his persecutions. But he preferred to leave the whole case in the hands of God; and his ruling desire was to follow the divine will. He who runs before he is sent runs without divine light and strength. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. . . . For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth (Ps. xxxvii. 7, 9).

LESSON VI. — FEBRUARY 6.

DAVID SPARING SAUL. — 1 SAM. xxiv. 1–16.

1. And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of En-gedi.

2. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

3. And he came to the sheepcots by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

4. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6. And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the Lord.

7. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

8. David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9. ¶ And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

10. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and *some* bade *me* kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my Lord; for he *is* the Lord's anointed.

11. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

12. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

13. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

14. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

15. The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

16. ¶ And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

Leaving Jonathan, David becomes a fugitive and an exile. He journeyed westward, and first took refuge with the priest Ahimelech, at Nob, who supplied him with provisions, and furnished him with the sword of Goliath, that as a trophy had been deposited in the tabernacle (xxi. 1–9). For this Saul visited Ahimelech and the town of Nob with terrible vengeance, causing the massacre of eighty-five priests, and putting to death all the inhabitants of the town, with their cattle and sheep (1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19).

Leaving Nob, David fled to Achish, king of Gath. Here, being detected by the servants of Achish, as the conqueror of Goliath, he feigned madness, and thus escaped with his life (xxi. 10–15).

Thence he returned to Judæa; and his first retreat was the cave of Adullam. Here his relatives, and distressed and discontented persons, came to him; and he became the captain of about four hundred adherents (xxii. 1, 2). Having taken his father and mother to

Moab for security, he returned, and came into the forest of Hareth (xxii. 3–5). At Hareth he received valuable re-enforcements (1 Chron. xii. 16). While here, the Philistines made an attack upon the border town Keilah, for the purpose of carrying off their harvests. David, with about six hundred followers, routed them, delivered the city, and shut themselves up within its walls. Thus David, notwithstanding the murderous hate of the king, was ready to march against the enemies of his country, exhibiting a patriotic ardor which tended to increase the regard and admiration of the people for him (xxiii. 1–5).

Saul, hearing that David was at Keilah, gathered his forces to take him; but he escaped from the city, and went, with a few friends, to the wilderness of Ziph, where he sought safety in the caves and woods (xxiii. 13–15). Now, in his own touching words, "he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains."

In the wilderness of Maon, David and his small band were almost in the grasp of Saul, when a sudden invasion of the Philistines required the king's attention, and he turned from David to fight them (xxiii. 24–28). The next movement brings us to the lesson where we have again the noble magnanimity of David in contrast with the repulsive character of the king.

VER. 1. *When Saul returned.* — This invasion of the Philistines, from which Saul returned, was probably a small marauding party, such as often invaded the border settlements of Judæa for plunder, particularly in the season of harvest.

Wilderness of Engedi, or, the rugged cliffs of Engedi; i.e., the spring of the wild goats, or gazelles, a name given to it from the vast number of ibexes, or Syrian chamois, that inhabited its cliffs and caverns. It is situated on the western shore of the Dead Sea, and is now called Ain Jiddy.

VER. 2. *Saul . . . went to seek David . . . upon the rocks of the wild goats.* — "Nothing but the blind infatuation of fiendish rage could have led the king to pursue his outlawed son-in-law among those cragged and perpendicular precipices, where were inaccessible hiding-places. But the overruling providence of God frustrated all his vigilance."

VER. 3. *He came to the sheepcots . . . where was a cave.* — Dr. Robinson says that this wild country is full of caverns that might serve as hiding-places for David and his men, as they do for outlaws at the present day. They are unchanged since Saul entered one of them in the heat of the day. There are the same side-vaults, where, in the darkness, David and his men saw Saul enter, while, blinded by the glare of the light outside, he failed to see the object of his pursuit. Some of these caves are very large, with numerous deep and dark recesses.

VER. 4. *The men said . . . Behold the day.* — There is no record of any promise made by God to deliver Saul into the hands of David, though, from the repeated promises that the kingdom should be his, they may have inferred that he was to be destroyed by taking advantage of such an opportunity as this. But David, being free from the spirit of revenge, resists their importunity, and simply cuts a fragment from the skirt of his robe. Probably the robe was a loose outer garment lying upon the ground while Saul was asleep.

VER. 5. *David's heart smote him.* — So conscientious was he, that even this slight act troubled him.

VER. 6. *The Lord's anointed.* — Notwithstanding Saul's grievous offences, he was still king by divine appointment. David, recognizing this, did not feel that he would be justified in slaying him.

VER. 7. *David stayed his servants.* — He would neither destroy the king himself, nor allow them to do it.

VER. 8. *David arose . . . and cried after Saul.* — How respectful his language! "My lord the king." How unimpaired his loyalty! "David stooped, with his face to the earth, and bowed himself." The wrongs from another do not take away his sense of right, or destroy his magnanimity. His kingly nature rises far above the jealous prince.

VERS. 9–12. *David said to Saul.* — This address of David to Saul is another proof of his own innocence, his extreme forbearance, his regard for the Lord's anointed, though as a man and a relentless persecutor Saul has forfeited all claim to his clemency. He shows also his readiness to commit the whole case to God.

VER. 13. *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.* — A man's wicked deeds show the wickedness of his heart. Had David been a wicked man, he would have conspired against the king, and sought his life. He is guilty of neither crime; and therefore Saul should see and acknowledge his goodness.

VER. 14. *A dead dog, a flea,* — terms that express the most humble, weak, and contemptible condition. Why should a great king come out against one of his own servants, who is only a poor shepherd, an exile? What honor or pleasure would it be to Saul to seek a dead dog, or pursue, with armed forces, a flea?

VER. 15. *The Lord be judge.* — To the Judge of all the earth, and to whom alone vengeance belongeth, David makes his appeal. For deliverance he relies upon him, and not upon himself.

VER. 16. *And Saul . . . wept.* — For the moment his heart is touched. He feels the truth and justice of what David has said, and confesses his own guilt. But being governed by emotions and passions, rather than by good principles, his repentance and friendship are only transient. Still they insure the present escape of David.

LESSON VII. — February 13.

Saul and his Sons slain. — 1 Sam. xxxi. 1-6.

1. Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in Mount Gilboa.
2. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons.
3. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.
4. Then said Saul unto his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armor-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.
5. And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.
6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.

Notwithstanding Saul's late tears and confession of wrong, and expression of admiration for David's generous treatment of him, still hatred and jealousy rule his heart. The Ziphites inform Saul of David's hiding-place in the hill of Hachilah, in the wilderness of Ziph; and, with three thousand chosen men, he goes forth to seek and destroy him (1 Sam. xxvi. 1, 2).

David, having found the locality of the king's encampment, seems, accompanied by Abishai his nephew, to have hid himself near by, and at night entered the camp, and approached Saul, who was sleeping with Abner and the guard. Abishai proposes to David to allow him to destroy the king, as "God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand" (1 Sam. xxvi. 8).

David again refuses to touch the Lord's anointed; and they take away the king's spear and the cruse of water. The Oriental spear was usually furnished with a spike at one extremity, for the purpose of sticking it in the ground when the warrior was at rest. A cruse of water stood near one's couch, in warm climates, for refreshment at night. This was probably made of superior materials, and richly ornamented, and thus easily distinguished (1 Sam. xxvi. 11, 12).

Leaving Saul's encampment, David ascended a distant hill, and "cried to the people and to Abner." The purity and elasticity of the air of Palestine enabled words spoken from an elevated position to be heard at a great distance; and the voice of David is recognized by Saul. David then addresses the king, and lets him know that his spear is in his possession, and that he desires to return it. Again Saul confesses his sins and his folly. He bestows his blessing upon David, and predicts that he shall do great things, and still prevail (1 Sam. xxvi. 13-25).

The campaign which now opens, in which Saul fought his last battle, was one of the most formidable that had occurred for years. After a season of rest, the Philistines gather their mightiest forces for an attack that will fully test the courage and resources of the Israelites (1 Sam. xxviii. 1, 4). From the heights of Gilboa, Saul surveys the formidable army of the Philistines in the plain of Esdraelon; and his heart failed him. Presentiments of coming disasters cast their shadows upon his troubled spirit. He inquired of the Lord for

council and help, but no answer was received. The God of Israel had forsaken him; and no message came to him, "neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." The cup of his iniquity is now full, and he must drink it (1 Sam. xxviii. 4–6).

Saul resorts to necromancy, to obtain the information which the Lord refused to give him. A woman who had a "familiar spirit" was found at Endor, to whom Saul, disguised, repaired by night with two attendants, desiring her to evoke the spirit of Samuel. Whatever may have been the nature of this woman's art, or her design in undertaking to fulfil the wish of Saul, it appears from the Scriptural record, that, before she had time to utter her incantations, the spirit of Samuel was permitted to appear, clad in the mantle having the rent that indicated the rending of the kingdom from the family of Saul. Saul recognized in the figure, the prophet who in the past had uttered the divine commands and warnings to him, and, from its passionless lips, listened to his awful doom. To-morrow, he and his sons will be numbered with the dead (1 Sam. xxviii. 7–49).

VER. 1. *The Philistines fought against Israel . . . in Mount Gilboa.* The region around Gilboa has been carefully examined, and found to accurately correspond with the Scriptural account of Saul's last battle. There is "the same sort of evidence that the account relates what is true, that a person would have that such a battle as Waterloo really took place (1 Sam. xxix. 1). Gilboa, Jezreel, Shunem, Endor, are all found still bearing the same name. They lie within sight of each other. Aphek is the only one of the cluster not yet identified. Jezreel is on the northern slope of Gilboa; and, at a distance of twenty miles to the east, is a large fountain, and a smaller one still nearer, — just the position a chieftain would select, both on account of its elevation, and the supply of water needed for his troops. . . . The battle probably began upon the great plain, the south-eastern extremity of which is bisected by the low range of Mount Gilboa; but, in the course of the conflict, the scene was shifted to the hill." — *Jamieson.*

The men of Israel fled, &c. — The Philistines were doubtless superior to the Hebrews in archery, and at a distance did fearful execution with their arrows. Besides, the leader of the Israelites was not in a state of mind to inspire his soldiers with hope or courage; and they are soon panic-stricken and thrown into confusion. They attempt to rally upon the heights of Mount Gilboa, but in vain.

VERS. 2, 3. *Philistines followed hard upon Saul and his sons.* — The king and his sons fought bravely, but they could not withstand the repeated assaults of the enemy. The three sons fall, and the king is mortally wounded.

VERS. 4, 5. *Draw thy sword, and thrust me through.* — Exhausted with fatigue and loss of blood, Saul fears, that, if he falls into the hands of the enemy, he will be treated with insult and cruelty (Josh. viii. 29, x. 24). He therefore requests his armor-bearer, who, according to Jewish authorities, was Doeg, to draw his sword and despatch him. The officer refusing, Saul falls upon his sword, and kills himself. The armor-bearer, following the example of his master, puts an end to his own life.

VER. 6. *So Saul died, and his three sons.* — Thus ends the inglorious reign of the first king of Israel. Honored of God in his appoint-

ment and early career, and promised the highest advantages if he would continue faithful, he falls a victim to pride, disobedience, and jealousy; and, after a wretched life, is left to self-destruction. His sons perish with him, under the law that so often links the destiny of the child with the parent.

The fate of Jonathan awakens our deepest sympathy; but, had he survived, a strong party might have risen up favorable to him as king; and thus the path of David to the throne may have been seriously obstructed. Such a character as Jonathan's cannot fail to receive its reward in that world where every man will be judged according to his deeds.

And all his men that same day together, — i.e., his servants, or body-guard, perished with him. The main part of the army had been put to flight, while those about the king were all slain.

The bodies of Saul and his sons were treated with great indignity, and made a spectacle of Israel's complete defeat, and ignominious subjugation (1 Sam. xxxi. 8–10). They were afterwards recovered by the hardy and heroic inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, and burnt, that they might not be exposed to further insult. The bones were buried under a tree, or under the soil at Jabesh (1 Sam. xxxi. 11–13).

LESSON VIII. — February 20.

David established King. — 2 Sam. v. 17–25.

17. ¶ But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard *of it*, and went down to the hold.
18. The Philistines also came, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.
19. And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.
20. And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place, Baal-perazim.
21. And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.
22. ¶ And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.
23. And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, Thou shalt not go up: *but* fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees.
24. And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.
25. And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba, until thou come to Gazer.

On the third day of David's return to Ziklag from the slaughter of the Amalekites, tidings are brought to him of the death of Saul and his sons (2 Sam. i. 1–4).

Among the people of the East it was customary, at the death of great kings and warriors, to celebrate their qualities and exploits in funeral-songs. The pathetic and striking elegy called forth from the poetic soul of David, by the death of Saul and Jonathan, is supposed to have become a national war-song, which was taught to the young Israelites. It has ever been justly admired as a vivid picture of deep and tender grief, of regard for the bravery of the king, and the warmest affection for Jonathan (2 Sam. i. 17–27).

David, having sought divine direction, goes at once to Hebron, where he is anointed king over the house of Judah. Hebron was the centre and capital of Judah, and was the seat of David's government for seven years. It was one of the most ancient cities of Canaan, and the favorite residence of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was also the special inheritance of Caleb. Its inhabitants were strongly attached to David; and the princes and elders, representatives of Judah, having offered David the crown, he accepted it (2 Sam. ii. 1–4).

Abner, the captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, and secured the acknowledgment of him at Mahanaim as king over the greater part of Israel. Ishbosheth was forty years of age when he began to reign, and reigned two years peaceably (2 Sam. ii. 8–10). The five following years he was involved in wars with David, during which the latter was constantly growing stronger, while "the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker" (1 Sam. iii. 1).

Abner, having been provoked by Ishbosheth, seeks revenge by espousing the cause of David, and offering to bring under his rule all

Israel (2 Sam. iii. 20, 21). Joab sends messengers to Abner, and, taking him aside, assassinates him (2 Sam. iii. 26, 27).

The death of Abner was a severe blow to Saul's son, who was a feeble prince, and relied greatly upon his general. But soon after he was killed by Baanah and Rechab (2 Sam. iv. 1–8).

The enemies of David being thus removed, all the tribes of Israel, through their representatives, came to Hebron; and he made a league with them before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. As an Israelite he was qualified for the throne; and his military qualities, his long experience, his familiarity with every phase of human character, fitted him for this exalted position. Yet his elevation to the throne was in accordance with God's decrees; though brought about gradually, and in a natural way, by the representatives of the people, who voluntarily elected him (2 Sam. v. 1–3).

One of the first acts of David's reign was to gain possession of Jebus on Mount Zion, which, since the time of Joshua, had remained in the hands of the natives, and was deemed impregnable. The Jebusites ridiculed the idea of any one taking the fortress, by placing upon the walls the lame and the blind, as a sufficient force to keep out invaders (2 Sam. v. 6).

But from the lower city, already in the possession of the Israelites, there was "a gutter," or subterraneous passage to the fortress, through which Joab, with a party of men, took "the stronghold of Zion." For this exploit Joab was appointed chief commander of the armies of Israel, having previously commanded the forces of the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. v. 6–8; 1 Chron. xi. 5, 6).

David, having thus taken the fortress, commemorated the achievement by calling it "the city of David." Here he fixed his residence, and erected a palace and other buildings, after strengthening the fort. This part of Jerusalem ever remained the royal quarter of the city.

VER. 17. *When the Philistines heard they had anointed David king over Israel.* — The Philistines, fearing the consequences of the consolidation of all the Hebrew tribes under the power of so able a military chieftain as David, resolved to attack him before he was firmly established in his kingdom.

David went down to the hold. — This was some strongly fortified place, where he could oppose the progress of the invaders, and whence he could successfully attack them.

VER. 18. *The Philistines came to the valley of Rephaim,* — i. e., the valley of giants. This was a broad and fertile plain, about a mile in length, that forms the southern entrance into Jerusalem, and extends northward into the deep ravine of the Hinnom. As formerly, the enemy select the time of harvest for the invasion, when the fertile fields present a temptation to these marauders.

VER. 19. *David inquired of the Lord.* — He showed his wisdom, and gained in power, by taking no important step without first seeking counsel of the Almighty.

VER. 20. *Baal-perazim.* — The plain, or master of the breaches. Thus David commemorates the breach that God made in the army of the Philistines, giving to him the glory of the victory.

VER. 21. *They left their images.* — It was the custom of most nations, to take their household deities with them into battle, to fight for them. In imitation of this, the Israelites once took the ark with

them, and lost it (1 Sam. iv. 3. 11). The images, according to the divine command, were burnt (Deut. vii. 5). Bishop Patrick well remarks, that, when the ark fell into the Philistines' hands, it consumed them; but, when these images fell into the hands of Israel, they could not save themselves from being consumed.

VER. 22. *The Philistines came up yet again.* — The next year, they appeared upon the field with a yet larger force.

VER. 23. *Fetch a compass behind them.* — The directions given by God now are different from those given at the time of the previous battle. Then David was charged to make a direct attack: now he was to compass them behind, or lay in ambush for them; and God would go before him, and strike the first blow.

VER. 24. *The sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees.* — It is now generally supposed that the aspen, or trembling poplar trees, are here referred to, the leaves of which are rustled by the slightest movement of the air. Such trees abound in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, and in Southern Palestine. The meaning of the passage is, that God caused a sound to pass through the tops of these trees, which the enemy mistook for the approach of the hosts of Israel. Being seized with fear, the Philistines began to break their rank, and flee: when David pursued them, inflicting upon the army great slaughter.

VER. 25. *From Geba to Gazer.* — Geba, a Levitical town, not far from the northern border of the kingdom of Judah, and six or seven miles from Jerusalem. Gazer, or Gezer, a royal city of the Canaanites, between Bethhoron and the Mediterranean Sea. To this point, in obedience to God's command, David drove the routed Philistines.

LESSON IX. — February 27.

The Ark brought to Zion. — 2 Sam. vi. 1–15.

1. Again, David gathered together all *the* chosen *men* of Israel, thirty thousand.
2. And David arose, and went with all the people that *were* with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts that dwelleth *between* the cherubims.
3. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that *was* in Gibeah; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.
4. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which *was* at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.
5. And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of *instruments made* of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.
6. ¶ And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*.
7. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God.
8. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day.
9. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?
10. So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.
11. And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.
12. ¶ And it was told King David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that *pertaineth* unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.
13. And it was *so*, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.
14. And David danced before the Lord with all *his* might; and David *was* girded with a linen ephod.
15. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

The ark of God was the most sacred object to the Jews. It was a chest, or coffer, containing the tables of the law, written by the finger of God, and witnessing to his covenant with his people (Exod. xxv. 22, xxxiv. 29). It is thus described: "It was of shittim-wood, covered within and without with plates of gold, nearly four feet in length, and two feet three inches in width and height. On the top of it all around ran a kind of gold crown. It had four rings of gold, two on each side, through which staves were put, by which it was carried. These also were overlaid with the finest gold, and were not to be removed from the rings (Exod. xxv. 10–22). The lid of the ark, all of gold, was called *the mercy-seat;* and upon its opposite ends were two golden cherubims, fronting each other and the mercy-seat, which they covered with their outspread wings (Exod. xxxvii. 1–9). Here God specially dwelt (2 Kings xix. 15; 1 Chron. xiii. 6), and shone forth, perhaps by some sensible manifestations (Lev. xvi. 2; Ps. lxxx. 1)."

"Here he received the homage of his people, and dispensed his living oracles (Num. vii. 89). The great yearly sacrifice of expiation was here offered by the high priest (Heb. ix. 7) in the Holy of Holies."

During the journey of the Israelites in the wilderness, the ark was borne, under a purple canopy, with great reverence, by the the priests,

before the people. After the crossing of the Jordan, it continued for some time at Gilgal (Josh. iv. 19), whence it was removed to Shiloh (Josh. xviii. 1). During a battle with the Philistines, the ark was removed from Shiloh to the camp, with the hope that it would save the Israelites from their enemies (1 Sam. iv. 3, 4). But the army of Israel was defeated, and the Philistines took the ark of God (1 Sam. iv. 10, 11).

The presence of the ark caused such distress among the Philistines that they returned it; and it abode in Kirjath-jearim for twenty years (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2). From subsequent history it appears that the ark was here for a much longer period than twenty years (1 Chron. xiii. 1–5); while this may indicate the time of spiritual declension, and the indifference of the people to its loss or recovery.

VER. 1. *Again David gathered together all the chosen men.* — This was a great national movement for the purpose of bringing the ark to Jerusalem. David, filled with gratitude to God for the high dignity conferred upon him, and the many special marks of the divine favor he had received, and animated with the desire to revive the services of religion, of which the ark is the great agency and ornament, calls a vast assembly of the leading men of the nation to consult in regard to this pious undertaking.

During the reign of Saul, the ark had been sadly neglected; and the people had become careless of the observances of religion, contenting themselves with offering sacrifices at Gibeah, without thinking of the ark, which was the most important part of the tabernacle. The proposition of David, so reasonable, and so advantageous to the nation, met with universal favor.

VER. 2. *Baale of Judah.* — The same as Baalah, or Kirjath-jearim (Josh. xv. 9). David went with a large force of picked men, as a mark of reverence for the ark of God, and to meet any opposition that the Philistines might make to the undertaking. A great concourse of people accompanied them.

VER. 3. *They set the ark of God upon a new cart,* — or covered wagon. "This was a hasty and inconsiderate procedure, in violation of an express statute (see Num. iv. 14, 15, vii. 9); and although the Philistines, who had conveyed it from their territory to the borders of Israel in a cart, had been allowed, as ignorant heathens, to do so with impunity, the case was very different with those who had been instructed in the divine law. But the whole population were moved to such transports of joy by the prosperous course of national events, that, in the delirium of that festive season, they did not pause to consider minutely the measures they adopted for the attainment of their object. They were extremely anxious to have the ark established at Jerusalem, where they could have access to it on all occasions when there was need to pray for counsel and succor; and for the attainment of so precious a treasure, so important a benefit to the national interests, all classes were eager to undertake any trouble, or to submit to any inconvenience. But, unhappily, they 'did evil, that thus good might come.'" — *Jamieson.*

Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. — Probably Abinadab was too old and infirm to perform this service, and hence it devolved upon his sons.

VER. 4. *Ahio went before the ark,* — i.e., to lead the oxen which drew it.

VER. 5. *David, and all the house of Israel, played before the Lord.* — David, with the priests and Levites, and musicians from various parts of the kingdom, attended the vast procession with vocal and instrumental music. The fir-wood was celebrated among the ancient Egyptians, for its fitness in the formation of musical instruments; and the knowledge of it was doubtless obtained from them by the Hebrews.

Harps, psalteries, &c. — These were the instruments in general use, and spoken of elsewhere. (See 1 Sam. x. 5, xvi. 23; Exod. xv. 20; Judg. ix. 34.)

Cornets. — Instruments which, on being rapidly moved, gave a tinkling sound. Cymbals were composed of two parts, which, on being struck together, produced a clanging sound. See Wilkinson's "Ancient Egyptians," vol. ii. p. 323, vol. iii. pp. 72, 73. In the account given 1 Chron. xiii. 8, mention is made of the singing of songs, that they sang "with all their might." Some writers suppose that the Twenty-fourth Psalm was sung in parts on this occasion.

VERS. 6, 7. *Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God.* — The oxen shook it; and Uzzah, fearing that it might be overturned, under the impulse of the moment laid hold of it, to keep it steady. Thus he violated an express command, given to the priests and Levites, that "they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die." (See Num. iv. 15; 1 Sam. vi. 19.) This error was doubtless committed without reflection, and without any sinful purpose, but with the design to save the ark from falling; and the sudden death of Uzzah may seem too severe a punishment for the offence: but he had violated a law that was given for the protection of the divine majesty, and to excite in the minds of the people a profound reverence for the symbols and ordinances of religion. And as the ark of God, after a long season of neglect, was being brought back to re-establish divine worship, and revive religious devotion and duties, it was necessary that it come with all the holy influences with which it was originally invested.

VER. 8. *And David was displeased.* — He was deeply grieved at the sudden death of Uzzah; and, in fact, the event threw a gloom over the joyous scene. The procession was stopped; and the ark was left where it then was, in the neighborhood of the capital.

Perez-uzzah. — This name given to the place, Josephus says, was continued to his time.

VER. 9. *David was afraid of the Lord.* — His fears were excited lest some other terrible judgments might fall upon him or upon the people. He did not know but that he had provoked the divine displeasure by removing the ark; and he deemed it best to stop where he was, which was not far from the city, and wait for further light.

VER. 10. *Carried it into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.* — A Levite, called a Gittite from his residence at Gath; or, probably, from Gath-rimmon, one of the Levitical cities referred to in Josh. xxi. 24, 25.

VER. 11. *The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.* — Blessings to the whole family flowed from the presence of the ark of God in the house. Every home is blessed by a daily recognition of the goodness and mercy of God, by family worship, and by cordially entertaining God's servants.

VER. 12. "*It was told King David,*" &c. — The ark having re-

mained three months in the house of Obed-edom, without inconvenience or danger, but with great advantage to the inmates, David's fears were dissipated; and measures were taken to bring it to the city in a manner becoming its sacredness. According to 1 Chron. xv. 14, 15, the priests and Levites sanctified themselves for the service; and the ark was borne "upon their shoulders, with the staves thereon," according to the word of the Lord.

VER. 13. *Sacrificed oxen and fatlings.* — Some suppose that four altars were hastily raised, at the distance of every six paces, upon which sacrifices were offered.

VER. 14. *David danced before the Lord.* — He laid aside his royal garments; and girded with a linen ephod, the official habit of priests, and of others engaged in a divine service, he manifested his joy by violent dancing and leaping.

VER. 15. *Brought up the ark with shouting.* — For a full account of the singing and music, see 1 Chron. xv. 16–24. Gifted Levites were trained to sing and play upon instruments for this great occasion. The performers were divided into three choirs, or bands; one having cymbals of brass, another psalteries, and another harps. Thus was the ark brought to Zion, with every demonstration of reverence and joy. The imposing ceremonies were calculated to impress the popular mind with a solemn veneration for the ark, and to direct the young to the duties of religion. A tabernacle was prepared to receive the ark: and appropriate services were instituted to commemorate this joyful event, and perpetuate its salutary influence (1 Chron. xvi. 1, 2).

LESSON X. — March 5.

God's Covenant with David. — 2 Sam. vii. 18–29.

18. ¶ Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who *am* I, O Lord God? and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And *is* this the manner of man, O Lord God?

20. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant.

21. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know *them*.

22. Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God; for *there is* none like thee, neither *is there any* God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

23. And what one nation in the earth *is* like thy people, *even* like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods?

24. For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel *to be* a people unto thee forever: and thou, Lord, art become their God.

25. And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* forever, and do as thou hast said.

26. And let thy name be magnified forever, saying, The Lord of hosts *is* the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

27. For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

28. And now, O Lord God, thou *art* that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

29. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue forever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken *it:* and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever.

After King David had completed his splendid palace, and was enjoying rest from his enemies, he said unto Nathan the prophet, "See, now, I dwell in a house of cedar; but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains" (2 Sam. vii. 1, 2). The contrast between his elegant mansion, built of costly and durable cedar, and the mean and temporary tent in which the ark of God was placed, deeply affected his pious heart. While a movable structure suited the migratory life of the Israelites in the wilderness, he felt that now the national religion required a permanent edifice built with all the splendor that the wealth and art of the people could furnish.

The pious design met with the prophet's cordial approval and encouragement (2 Sam. vii. 3). But God directs otherwise; and in addressing David as his servant (2 Sam. vii. 8), he gives him the assurance that his good intentions are appreciated; and elsewhere (1 Kings viii. 18) he commends him by saying, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

But his successor he appoints to build the house (2 Sam. vii. 12, 13), promising, in the mean time, to defend the nation against the wicked, and prosper them, if they avoid rebellion and apostasy, and are faithful in their allegiance to him.

God then enters into a solemn covenant with David (see 2 Sam. vii. 15–16): "My mercy shall not depart away from him . . . and thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee;

thy throne shall be established forever." Such is the solemn covenant, or oath, of the Lord, by which he secures to David the perpetuity of his seed and his kingdom; and which is celebrated in his Psalms (Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4, 35, 36, cxix. 41, 49), and by the prophets who succeeded him. Like the promise made to Abraham, it had a twofold meaning, — one pointing to David's natural posterity and earthly kingdom, and the other to the Messiah and his heavenly kingdom. The first furnishes the types and pledges for the fulfilment of the second. "It was to fulfil the temporal part of this promise, that the Lord continued the house of David so long on the throne of Judah, notwithstanding all their frequent and aggravated rebellions against him (1 Kings xi. 36; 2 Kings viii. 19); and it was repeatedly appealed to by the Jewish church, when the judgments inflicted upon David's temporal house and kingdom seemed to make it void. This promise, as it represented David's natural seed, was conditional, so that the Lord at length deprived them of the kingdom: but he did not by that deprivation violate or nullify the covenant with his servant; for this was only what he threatened at the commencement of it to do in the event of their committing iniquity (1 Chron. xxviii. 9). But how, then, was the promise made good, that David's seed should sit on his throne forever? The spiritual and eternal part of the promise pointed to the Messiah, who was to come of the seed of David according to the flesh, and to be raised up from the dead, to sit forever on his heavenly throne. The promise, as it respects the Messiah, was absolute, and in him had its accomplishment" (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; Isa. iv. 2, xi. 1; Ezek. xxxvii. 25–27; Luke i. 31–33, 68–70).

VER. 18. *Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord.* — The lesson opens with David's prayer, after God had made with him his holy covenant. Sitting, in ancient times, was the attitude of devotion. Eli, the priest, sat before the Lord. (See 1 Sam. i. 9, iv. 13.) The ancient Egyptians sat upon their heels before their shrines; and this is the attitude of deepest respect, before a superior, in the East. It is also the posture of Mohammedans when engaged in their religious rites.

Who am I, O Lord God? — The prayer opens with expressions of humility, gratitude, and joyful surprise. David reviews his career from his humble origin to his present exalted position, — a career marked with tokens of the divine care, and special interpositions in his behalf.

VER. 19. *Of thy servant's house for a great while to come.* — The crowning blessing from God was his promise of the long-continued prosperity of the house of David, in the royal line of succession.

Is this the manner of man, O Lord? — This is the manner of man, and not of God, to deal thus familiarly with one so obscure as myself. For "thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God" (1 Chron. xvii. 17). Thou hast treated me not as the son of a shepherd, but as though I were an illustrious prince.

VER. 20. *What can David say more unto thee?* — His obligations are greater than he can express. The Lord, who knows his servant, has supplied all his wants, and surpassed his highest expectations.

VER. 21. *According to thine own heart, hast thou done these great things,* — i.e., they are the result not of my personal merits, but flow from thine own boundless liberality.

VER. 22. *Thou art great, O Lord God.* — The more we meditate upon the mercies and loving kindness of God, and the nearer we are brought to him, the more we adore his greatness and majesty.

VERS. 23–26. *And what one nation in the earth*, &c. — In these verses, David recognizes the great favors and wonderful achievements of God for Israel, thus distinguishing this nation above all the nations of the earth. He would have the name of the Lord magnified; and the greatest thing he can say of this nation is, "The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel." While other nations are under idols, the everlasting God is the ruler and portion of Israel.

VER. 27. *For thou, O Lord, hast revealed to thy servant.* — Hast uncovered the ear of thy servant; i.e., communicated to him, through his prophet, his gracious will and kind purposes.

VERS. 28, 29. *Thou, O God, hast spoken it.* — This is his assurance that every divine promise will be fulfilled (Isa. xl. 8; 1 Pet. i. 25).

LESSON XI. — March 12.

Absalom's Rebellion. — 2 Sam. xv. 1–14.

1. And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.
2. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so*, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel.
3. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.
4. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!
5. And it was *so*, that when any man came nigh *to him*, to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.
6. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
7. ¶ And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord, in Hebron.
8. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord.
9. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.
10. ¶ But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.
11. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, *that were* called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.
12. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.
13. ¶ And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.
14. And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

Absalom was the third son of David, and his only son by Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur (2 Sam. iii. 3).

He was regarded as the handsomest man in the kingdom, and was particularly noted for the great abundance and beauty of his hair. When it grew so as to incommode him, and he cut it off, it was found to weigh two hundred shekels, that is, about thirty ounces, an extraordinary but not incredible weight (2 Sam. xiv. 25, 26).

David had one daughter by Maacah, named Tamar, who was also very beautiful. Her honor, as was usual in countries where polygamy prevails, was under the guardianship of her full brother more than that of the father, "whose interest in her is considered less peculiar and intimate." Her half-brother Amnon, David's eldest son, having wronged her, Absalom revenged himself by causing his death (2 Sam. xiii. 23–29).

Absalom fled to Geshur, and remained there three years with his grandfather, King Talmai. After David had recovered from the grief occasioned by the death of Amnon, his heart yearned after his son Absalom (2 Sam. xiii. 38, 39). His beauty, ardent spirit, and royal birth, as well as having been a favorite son, drew forth the paternal

affections towards him, which, however, he did not appreciate. David would gladly have recalled the banished fratricide; but a just horror of his crime, and a regard for public opinion, forbade him.

Through the efforts of Joab, aided by a clever device of a woman of Tekoah, the king was persuaded to allow Absalom to return. He was not, however, admitted to his father's presence, but remained in his own house two years. Impatient under his disgrace, he sent for Joab, who effected a reconciliation; and Absalom was once more received by his father (2 Sam. xiv. 21–23, 28–33).

By the death of Amnon and of Chileab, the two eldest brothers, Absalom was now, according to the law of primogeniture, heir to the crown. But, under the Jewish theocracy, the divine king exercised the power of designating the successor, independent of this general law, and had expressed his preference for Solomon, who was at that time a child, as the heir to the throne. This fact, known to David, must have been known to others; and we find in it a motive for the rebellion of Absalom. He wished to secure the throne by the laws of primogeniture, without waiting for the death of his father, and before Solomon attained maturity, and popularity with the people. The design of this rebellion was doubtless formed during his retirement; and the reconciliation with his father was eagerly sought to aid in its speedy execution.

Ver. 1. *Absalom prepared him chariots and horses.* — Restored to the king's palace, the heir-apparent to the throne assumes the state and equipage of a prince. The chariots of those days were magnificent vehicles, used by persons of dignity and rank (see Gen. xli. 43, xlvi. 29; 1 Sam. viii. 11). Horses were rare among the Hebrews at that time, and were used to form a splendid retinue by royalty.

And fifty men to run before him. — Eminent persons who rode on horseback, or in splendid vehicles, had one or more servants who preceded them, bearing a stick, or baton, which was waved right and left to clear the way, especially in the narrow streets of the Oriental cities. These runners would go for many miles without stopping, their feet covered with dust, and often bleeding from wounds. Members of the royal family usually had fifty in attendance (see 1 Kings, i. 5).

Riding thus through the cities, Absalom with his fine person, superior birth, and courteous manners, impressed the people with his claims, and won their favor.

Ver. 2. *Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate.* —In the East, public business is usually transacted early in the morning. Kings sit for an hour or more in the open air, at the city gate, to hear and decide upon causes, and receive petitions from the people. David, through the infirmities of age or severe sickness, and being absorbed in conflicts with enemies (see Ps. xxxviii. 3–8, 19), had neglected many private causes, and thus occasioned wide-spread dissatisfaction. Absalom availing himself of this feeling, and as far as possible increasing it, stepped in between the king and the suitors, and, patiently listening to their grievances, gratified them with favorable decisions.

Vers. 3–6. *There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.* — Therefore your interests are sadly neglected. "Oh that I were made a judge in the land!" Thus concealing his ambitious designs, and professing the deepest concern for the welfare of the people, and caressing all who came to him, "he stole the hearts of

the men of Israel." They could not but contrast his promptness, generosity, and public spirit, with the weakness and inefficiency of his father's government; and hence he soon became a general favorite.

VER. 7. *After forty years.* — This is doubtless an error that has crept into the text. According to the Syriac and Arabic versions, and to Josephus, this should read "four years;" that is, from the time Absalom returned to Jerusalem, and began his efforts to secure popular favor.

VERS. 7, 8. *Let me go and pay my vow.* — Absalom professes to have made a vow to the Lord, that, if he would restore him to Jerusalem, he would offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

He selects Hebron, a sacred city, the residence of priests, where sacrifices had often in the past been offered to God, for the performance of his vow, while in reality he regards it as a most suitable place for commencing his rebellious enterprise. Thus, under the cloak of religion, he plots the ruin of his father, and his usurpation of the throne.

VER. 9. *The king said, Go in peace.* — The pious father, ever ready to encourage the performance of religious duties, bids his son depart with his blessing.

VER. 10. *Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel.* — They go to sound the feelings of the people, and to prepare them for the signal to join the usurper of the government.

The sound of the trumpet. — Probably trumpeters were placed on elevated positions, to announce to the whole country the news when Absalom was proclaimed king.

VER. 11. *Two hundred men . . . that were called.* — Two hundred men of influence and high standing were invited to accompany him to give dignity to his movement, and to join him in the feast of his sacrifice. "They knew not any thing," were not acquainted with his disloyal purposes.

VER. 12. *Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite.* — This man had been David's counsellor (Ps. lv. 13) and familiar friend (Ps. xli. 9), and was an able and clear-headed politician. He had deserted David, having, as Jewish writers assert, become disgusted with him on account of his conduct towards Bathsheba, who was his granddaughter. A more efficient ally Absalom could not have selected. He sent for him while he was offering his sacrifices, thus showing that his heart was not in his religious services.

The conspiracy was strong. — Multitudes flocked to its standard in all parts of the kingdom, showing the deep and wide-spread dissatisfaction that prevailed towards the person and government of David. The services rendered to the people by Absalom, the remaining adherents to the house of Saul, the king's treatment of Bathsheba, the insolence and crimes of Joab, and David's neglect in the administration of justice, all contributed to the great success of the conspiracy (Ps. iii. 1).

VER. 14. *Arise, and let us flee.* — David, anxious for the preservation of the city that he had enlarged and beautified, fled from Jerusalem, and retired to Mahanaim, beyond Jordan. In this hour of deep distress, he looks to God alone for support (Ps. iii. 3). In him is his confidence and courage (Ps. iii. 5, 6). To him he prays (Ps. iii. 7, 8).

LESSON XII. — March 19.

Absalom's Death. — 2 Sam. xviii. 24–33.

24. And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

25. And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he *be* alone, *there is* tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26. And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold *another* man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27. And the watchman said, Me-thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He *is* a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

28. And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed *be* the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

29. And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was*.

30. And the king said *unto him*, Turn aside, *and* stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31. And, behold, Cushi came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32. And the king said unto Cushi, *Is* the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man *is*.

33. ¶ And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

What specially alarmed David was, that Ahithophel, whose profound sagacity caused his counsels to be regarded as oracles, had espoused the cause of Absalom. He therefore persuaded his friend Hushai to go and join Absalom, and defeat the counsel of Ahithophel (2 Sam. xv. 34). He went to the city; and Absalom came into Jerusalem, and took possession of the throne, without opposition (2 Sam. xv. 37).

The first advice that Ahithophel gave to Absalom was, to publicly take possession of that portion of his father's harem that had been left behind at Jerusalem. Thus the people would infer that no reconciliation could be made between the father and the son, and would throw themselves the more readily into his cause, and so greatly add to its strength (2 Sam. xvi. 20–22).

Soon after, Hushai made his appearance, when a council of war was held, with reference to the best course to be pursued against David. Ahithophel advised that the king should be pursued that very night, and smitten while he was weary and weak-handed, and the people all brought back to Absalom (2 Sam. xvii. 1–3).

Hushai, to gain time for David, spoke of the king's valor, and pointed out the fatal consequences of a defeat, and the expediency of gathering such a force as it would be impossible for David to withstand.

Fatally for the cause of Absalom, the plan proposed by Hushai was adopted; and thus time was given to enable the king to strengthen his forces, and the people to reflect upon the undertaking in which they had hastily embarked (2 Sam. xvii. 6–14).

The king at once raised and organized an army, which he separated into three divisions, placed under Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gittite. The king wished to command the army in person; but the people would not allow him to risk his life, and the chief command rested upon Joab (2 Sam. xviii. 1–3).

David charged the generals to deal gently with Absalom (2 Sam. xviii. 5). His affection for his son was still intense, and he could not bear the thought of his dying in his sins. Besides, he may have viewed the rebellion as a judgment from heaven for his own sins.

The battle was fought in the borders of the forest of Ephraim. Joab enticed the enemy into the woods, and, surrounding them, put multitudes to death. Twenty thousand fell; and Absalom escaped on a swift mule. As he went, his long hair was caught in the branches of a terebinth-tree, and he was suspended there (2 Sam. xviii. 6–9).

The person who discovered him, respecting the king's wishes, did not slay him. But Joab, hastening to him, thrust him through with three darts. His body-guard then completed the work (2 Sam. xviii. 10–15).

VER. 24. *David sat between the two gates.* — David was as anxious in regard to the fate of his son, as he was for his own safety and throne. He stationed himself in the tower-house, on the wall, over the gate of Mahanaim. There was a watch-tower near, where a sentinel, in time of war, was posted, to give notice of every occurrence.

Behold a man running alone. — The scene here is graphically described. This messenger was Ahimaaz, who first desired to bear the tidings of Absalom's death to David, but whose offer Joab, for some reason, declined. Cushi was selected for the service; and, afterwards, Ahimaaz was permitted to follow him.

VER. 27. *The foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz.* — Ahimaaz was famous as a runner, and could be recognized at a distance. He had outrun his companion, and arrived first. Being known as a good man, the expectation was that he would bring good tidings.

VER. 28. *All is well.* — This was the usual salutation among the Hebrews.

He fell on his face. — Not only out of respect for the king, but in reverence to God, whom he praised for the victory. By thus directing David's mind to rendering thanks to God, he hoped to prepare him for the sad tidings he had to communicate.

VERS. 29, 30. *I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.* — Thus Ahimaaz endeavors, by carefully approaching the subject, to still further prepare the king for the news. But he is told to stand aside, and wait for the arrival of the other messenger.

VER. 31. *Cushi came.* — He speaks with more plainness, and yet with caution, so as to save, as far as possible, the feelings of the king.

VER. 32. *The enemies of my Lord . . . be as that young man is.* — The king perfectly understood his words. He does not describe the manner of Absalom's death, but simply announces that his fate was what he desired might be the fate of all traitors against the king.

VER. 33. *Went up to the chamber over the gate.* — A distinguished traveller says, "To most houses of respectable size, or public importance, there is a smaller one annexed, which sometimes rises one story higher than the house. At other times it consists of one room or two

rooms only, and a terrace; while others that are built, as they frequently are, over the porch, or gateway, have, if we except the ground-floor, which they have not, all the conveniences that belong to the house, properly so called. It is a sequestered part of the building to which a person can retire for meditation and undisturbed solitude."

O my son Absalom! — The grief for a lost son extinguishes all thought of the victory that had been won. Some blame the king for showing so much fondness for a graceless son, and charge him with opposing divine Providence, disregarding the mercy of his deliverance, and the interests of the nation. But such an outburst of natural affection awakens our sympathy, and reveals the nobleness of a father's heart, if it does not show the strength of a king.

Absalom, before his death, reared a pillar for himself (2 Sam. xviii. 18), said by Josephus to be of marble, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There is a remarkable monument in this valley, outside of Jerusalem, which is described by travellers as Absalom's tomb. The body of the monument is twenty-four feet square, and it rises to the height of forty feet. It is ornamented on each side, and evidently bears the style of a later architecture than that prevailing at the time of Absalom. In verse 17 we are told that "they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him." In the East, the people indicate their detestation of the memory of an infamous person by casting stones upon the place where he is buried. The heap is increased by the accumulation of stones, which persons passing by add to it.

The fate of the soul of this profligate young man, we must leave in the hands of his Creator. It was a most touching inquiry that the king made of the messenger, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The only real safety is in obedience to the commands of our heavenly Father, whose love and power are pledged for the protection of his children.

SECOND QUARTER.

LESSONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

LESSON I. — April 2, 1876.

The Ascending Lord. — Acts i. 1-12.

1. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
2. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:
3. To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:
4. And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.
5. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.
6. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?
7. And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.
8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
9. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.
10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,
11. Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.
12. Then returned they unto Jerusalem, from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

Ver. 1. *The former treatise.* — Literally, according to the Greek, the first book, referring to the Gospel by St. Luke. It was the first in the order of time, having been written previously to the book of Acts; and presents the groundwork of the subsequent events in the history of the apostles. It is the first in importance; as a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ occupies the highest place, and is the foundation of religious truth and spiritual hopes.

6. *O Theophilus.* — As Luke addressed his Gospel to Theophilus (Luke i. 3), it is evident that he is the author of this second treatise, or book, which is a continuation of that history. This man was a Gentile of rank, who had embraced Christianity, and resided at Rome, or in some part of Italy, or, as some suppose, in Alexandria. He repre-

sented the Gentile readers, for whom Luke wrote his Gospel, giving such information respecting Jewish customs and places as they needed.

Of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. — The author claims that his history of Christ is a complete record of his works and words, his miracles and discourses; without, however, maintaining that every incident in his life is given. St. John says that this was not possible (John xxi. 25); nor was it necessary to specify every event. We have all that we need in the main facts of his life, and in the cardinal doctrines of the system of truth he revealed.

VER. 2. *Until the day in which he was taken up.* — Or, as in Luke xxiv. 51, in which he was borne, or carried up, into heaven. The ascension of Christ was the closing event of his earthly history, and very properly the termination of the Gospel narrative. It is also the beginning of his invisible reign, and his universal presence and spiritual operations on the earth. He now takes a higher position, one of greater power, dignity, and glory, having a name that is above every name. "The foremost place is here assigned to the history of the ascension to heaven, in order that we may continually remember that all that occurred in the visible world, and that is related in this book, originates in the invisible world, 'whither the Lord Jesus is for us entered' (Heb. vi. 20). He who desires to understand aright the form which the Church of Christ assumes on earth must continually bear the ascension of Christ in mind, and the invisible process by which he took possession of his kingdom, as well as the future manifestation of that kingdom." — *C. H. Rieger.*

After he had . . . given commandments unto the apostles. — Here, very naturally, follow some details of what took place, to carry forward Christ's kingdom by human agencies, animated and guided by those which are divine. Reference is made to his commandments to his disciples, obedience to which would be the execution of the divine will. These were given through, or by virtue of, the Holy Ghost, with which Christ was filled (Luke iv. 1, 14, 18), and thus had the authority of the two persons of the holy Trinity. Some discover the additional idea that he chose his apostles through the Holy Ghost (among whom are Olshausen and De Wette, and many interpreters before them); but the former view seems the most simple and natural.

Whom he had chosen. — Whom he had selected and supernaturally endowed to be his true witnesses and faithful preachers of his gospel. This gracious act of our Lord's wisdom and kingly authority and love cannot be too highly estimated by his followers. In the very hour of his ascension he gives instructions, as he had done in his life and just before his death. These are learned, as well as taught, through the Holy Ghost. The power in giving, receiving, and executing, is divine.

VER. 3. *To whom he showed himself alive.* — As the resurrection of Christ was the crowning evidence of his divinity, and the great doctrine that the apostles were commissioned to preach, it was accompanied by many infallible proofs, such as could not be denied or reasonably doubted. There was not one proof alone, but many. He showed himself alive to others, as well as to his apostles; to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (Matt. xxviii. 1–9), to the two disciples

who were going to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 15), to Simon Peter (Luke xxiv. 34), to the ten apostles assembled on the evening of the first day of the week (John xx. 19), and afterwards to the eleven (John xx. 26), to the seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (John xxi. 1–5), to above five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. xv. 6), and to all the apostles either before or at his ascension.

He proved his personal identity by talking with them, showing his wounds, eating before them, working miracles, and manifesting the same interest in them that characterized their friendship before his death. Whatever changes may have taken place in his bodily organization, he was the same Jesus who died upon the cross, and was recognized as such by his disciples.

Being seen of them forty days. — That is, at intervals and on different occasions during forty days. This is the only record we have of the time that elapsed between the resurrection and the ascension. Luke, in his "former treatise," mentions the events, without furnishing the dates of their occurrence.

Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. — At the interviews, during these memorable forty days, our blessed Lord further instructs and enlightens his disciples. He converses with them familiarly upon themes and events pertaining to the everlasting kingdom of God in heaven, and to the church on earth. We may gain a hint of the impressions he made, and the deep emotions he excited, from the disciples with whom he walked to Emmaus, who said, "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke xxiv. 32.)

VER. 4. *Being assembled together.* — Although, after the resurrection, the apostles scattered to their homes in Galilee, where Jesus appeared to them (Matt. xxvi. 32; John xxi. 1), yet it is evident that they had now returned to Jerusalem, where the final parting was to take place.

Commanded them. — Jesus met with them, and commanded them not to depart, but to await the gift of the Holy Ghost. They would naturally desire to leave a city filled with their enemies, and with painful recollections of the sufferings of their Lord, and of the insults heaped upon him. "But it was the will of God, that the law should go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. ii. 1–3); that the foundations of his Messianic kingdom should be laid on this holy mountain; that, on the spot in which enmity against the Lord's Anointed had assumed the most awful form, the superior power of grace might be revealed; and that there the glory of the name of Christ should be displayed in the most triumphant manner, by the effusion of the Spirit, by the conversion of thousands, and by signs and wonders." — *Lange's Commentary.*

The promise of the Father. — This was the great and blessed promise of the outpouring of the Spirit. It is termed the promise of the Father, because it was made through the prophets under the old dispensation (see Isa. xliv. 3; Joel ii. 28; Zech. xii. 10). *Which ye have heard of me.* — Christ refers to this promise in Luke xii. 11, 12, and repeats it in John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xv. 26, &c.

VER. 5. *Baptized with the Holy Ghost.* — After John had baptized Jesus with water, he uttered the promise, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Luke iii. 16). This had been fulfilled (John

xx. 22), but now the Spirit was to be poured out upon them in its fulness and abundant power. Oh that we might seek until we obtain a full baptism of God's Holy Spirit!

Not many days hence. — It was in about ten days, but Christ did not specify the day or the hour. He would have his people watch and pray, and wait patiently for his coming. This is a part of our education to receive him.

VER. 6. *Wilt thou at this time restore . . . the kingdom?* — Since Christ's resurrection he had often spoken of his kingdom; and his words at this time seem to arouse the patriotic ardor of those who listen to him. They desire to see liberty, power, and grandeur restored to their nation; and to their minds the divine promises hang over them full of temporal blessings. Their ideal of a kingdom is the kingdom of Israel in its glory, outshining all the kingdoms of the world.

VER. 7. *It is not for you to know.* — This answer, exhibiting divine wisdom combined with human tenderness, is intended to instruct, rather than rebuke; as though he had said, "It is not fitting or best that you should know the times or the seasons, or periods. These are secrets belonging to the Father, whose rightful prerogatives the Son should guard."

VER. 8. *But ye shall receive power.* — If there is not granted to you a knowledge of the precise periods of future events, yet ye shall receive power to work now, and thus hasten the coming of the Lord's kingdom. It is far better to be thus employed as mighty agencies for good, than to be indulging in mere speculations as to times and seasons.

This power will follow the outpouring of the Spirit, and will consist of miraculous gifts. It will be a power with God and men for the accomplishment of a mighty work in the world.

Shall be witnesses. — They shall be living witnesses of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God and Saviour of men. Their vocation, their preaching his doctrines, their willingness to toil and suffer for him, shall be witnesses for Christ.

In Jerusalem, all Judæa, &c. — Here our Lord marks out the precise course of the streams of salvation that have their source at Jerusalem.

1. The apostles began their work at the temple (Acts iii. 1), and converts first multiplied in Jerusalem (Acts vi. 7). 2. The persecutions, in the time of Stephen, scattered abroad the disciples "throughout the regions of Judæa" (Acts viii. 1), where they preached the word. 3. Next they crossed over to Samaria, where they found a mixed people that formed a connecting link between the Jews and Gentiles. 4. Then Antioch became a centre of operations in the Gentile world; and the conversion of Saul, and the vision of Peter, led to the wide extension of Christianity.

VER. 9. *While they beheld, he was taken up.* — The ascension which Christ himself had predicted (John xvi. 10, vi. 62, xiv. 28), now takes place before their eyes. They saw it, and were thus prepared to testify to its truth. It corresponded with other miracles they had seen, especially to those who beheld his transfiguration. It was what they might have expected, a glorious termination of the series of wonderful works on earth since the day he entered upon his public ministry.

A cloud received him. — "He maketh the clouds his chariot," and how appropriately! A cloud was the visible emblem of the divine presence to the Israelites in the wilderness. From the bright cloud (Matt. xvii. 5), a voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son." Elijah, the stern prophet of the old dispensation, was caught up *in a whirlwind* (2 Kings ii. 11). "The Prince of peace" is borne up in a beautiful cloud. The departure of the former has been compared to "the flight of a bird, which none can follow." The latter opens a new avenue between earth and heaven, of which Jacob's ladder was a type (Gen. xxviii. 12). Christ refers to it in John i. 51, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

VER. 10. *While they looked steadfastly toward heaven.* — Absorbed by the wonderful and splendid scene, they continued to gaze earnestly toward the world whither Jesus had gone. Scarcely is he out of their sight before two angels appear, probably the same who appeared to comfort and direct the disciples after the resurrection. It has been suggested, that they may have been Moses and Elias, who appeared at the transfiguration (Luke ix. 30, 31).

In white apparel. — In brilliant celestial robes (Mark xvi. 5), "In raiment white as snow" (Matt. xxviii. 3). How many of Christ's disciples have received bright visions of their Saviour, and of his heavenly attendants, who have looked steadily up for guidance, strength, and comfort!

VER. 11. *Ye men of Galilee.* — The angels thus addressed them, for they knew their origin and history. They knew them as God's messengers called from a humble sphere to a high position and a sublime work. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" There are active duties that demand your attention, great events in the future to which you should look.

This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner. — This same being whom they have known and loved, whom they have seen as crucified and risen, and now ascending to heaven, shall return in like manner, visibly, in a cloud, and as the Son of man (Luke xxi. 27). "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10).

VER. 12. *Then returned they to Jerusalem.* — They returned "with great joy" (Luke xxiv. 52), from Mount Olivet, distant "a sabbath day's journey;" that is, three-quarters of an English mile, or four thousand German feet. Luke's previous statement that "he led them out as far as to Bethany" (Luke xxiv. 50), does not conflict with this. The statement here refers to the general distance of the mount, and does not imply the exact distance from the spot whence the Saviour ascended. As Bethany was fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem (John ii. 18). nearly two miles, and as only six furlongs are assigned to a sabbath day's journey, the precise spot from which the Lord ascended must be between these two points.

LESSON II. — April 9.

The Day of Pentecost. — Acts ii. 1–11.

1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
3. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
4. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
5. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.
6. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.
7. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans?
8. And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?
9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,
10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
11. Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

In this lesson we have presented to us the founding and development of the Christian Church. The break in the apostolic ranks, by the apostasy of Judas, had been filled by the election of Matthias. The twelve apostles and the other disciples were, in accordance with Christ's command, waiting at Jerusalem for the Comforter from the Father, for the advent of the Holy Spirit, that was to mark a new and blessed era in the history of the world's redemption.

Ver. 1. *The day of Pentecost.* — This was the *fiftieth* day after the Passover closed, the word "pentecost" signifying *fiftieth*. It was reckoned from the sixteenth of the month Nisan, which was the second day of the feast of the Passover (Lev. xxiii. 15, 16). It was called the feast of weeks (Exod. xxxiv. 22), because it was kept seven weeks after the Passover. Then the first fruits of the wheat harvest, which at that time was completed, were offered to the Lord (Deut. xvi. 9, 10). It was also called, "the day of the first fruits;" and other special sacrifices were prescribed for this festival (see Num. xxviii. 26–31). It was the most largely attended by Jews from foreign parts, of the three great festivals at which all the adult males were required to go up to Jerusalem. While the people of Israel were observing it as a festival of thanksgiving for the first harvest of the year, how appropriate, that, under the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit, it should be the source of the first great spiritual harvest, when, from fields already white for the harvest, three thousand souls, in a single day, should be gathered into the garner of the Lord!

It was also called by the Jews, "the feast of the joy of the law," to commemorate the giving of the law at Sinai, which was on the fiftieth day of the exodus, when the passover was killed (Exod. xix. 1). How suitable, then, was the day for the founding of the Christian Church, when the law, instead of being engraved upon tables of stone, was to

be written upon human hearts, and was to "go forth from Jerusalem" under a new covenant, to bless the world (Jer. xxxi. 31–33).

They were all with one accord in one place. — The day of Pentecost having fully arrived, they were all, the hundred and twenty (Acts i. 15) and others who may have met with them, with one accord in one place. The Greek term translated, "with one accord," is used eleven times in the Book of Acts. It expresses the necessary unity of the Church, and brings to mind Christ's precious promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). The Holy Spirit cannot visit and dwell with the contentious and ungodly, but only with those who are united in the bonds of love, and breathe forth together their prayers and supplications.

VER. 2. *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven.* — It was so sudden that it awakened great surprise, mingled, doubtless, with alarm. It was calculated to arouse the deepest attention to what was to follow. It was a sound like that of a rushing mighty wind. It might well remind the listeners of the command given to Ezekiel in his vision (Ezek. xxxvii. 9), to "cry to the wind, and prophesy, and say to the wind, Come from the four winds, O breath [or Spirit, as the Hebrew allows] and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." This sound as of a rushing mighty wind was the divinely appointed herald of the coming Spirit. It filled the house preparatory to the Spirit's filling the hearts of the assembly.

VER. 3. *Cloven tongues like as of fire.* — That is, the appearance of a fiery body, distributed in the form of tongues, and resting upon each of them. This was the baptism of fire that John promised (Matt. iii. 11), the fire that the Lord desired to have kindled (Luke xii. 49). These visible flames were an emblem of the spiritual light that comes from heaven, and of the holy ardor and glowing emotions that should fill the Christian heart. "The form of tongues signified that the tongue, the word, or speech, thoroughly pervaded and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, should communicate and reveal all that is heavenly and holy. The circumstance, that such a tongue of light and fire descended and sat upon each individual who was present, was an emblem of that fulness of the Spirit, which was designed for, and imparted to, each individual as a permanent gift." — *Lange.*

VER. 4. *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* — The Spirit was not given to them in part, or by measure, but in its fulness (John iii. 34). It came as Christ had promised, as the Comforter, as a revealer of all truth, as a reminder of Christ's words, as a permanent indwelling agency to abide with them forever.

Began to speak with other tongues. — Being thus filled with the Spirit, they were inspired to speak in the languages of those present, so as to be understood by them. It is not necessary to suppose that this gift was continued to them for the purpose of preaching the gospel afterwards, but was designed specially for this occasion. There were "divers kinds of tongues," or "diversities of tongues," all derived from the same Spirit, yet different gifts.

As the Spirit gave them utterance. — The whole was the free gift of the Spirit. They were inspired of God to make known his wonderful works; to present with ease and fluency, in languages that they had

never learned, the chief and extraordinary facts in Christ's history, and the main features of the plan of salvation, and to pour forth the praises of God in solemn adoration.

VER. 5. *There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews*, &c. — They were not simply sojourning, but *residing* there; many, after a residence elsewhere, having made the Holy City their abode, that they might be near the temple, and convenient to the annual religious services and feasts. They were "*devout men.*" They were in a state of mind and heart to receive and appreciate the truth. They shared largely in the general expectation of a coming Messiah, and were therefore prepared to accept at once the proofs of his advent. They illustrate the words of Jesus (Matt. xiii. 12): "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and he shall have more abundance."

Out of every nation under heaven. — We see the wonderful goodness and faithfulness of God, who, amid severe judgments inflicted upon his disobedient people, prepares a pathway for the extension of the gospel. On account of their sins, the Jews had been scattered among all nations, and thus had learned the respective languages in those nations. At Alexandria they were so numerous that the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek for their use, nearly three hundred years before Christ. Great numbers of the Jews were carried into Egypt; and at the three great national festivals, and especially at this of Pentecost, they came from all quarters to Jerusalem. And now God employs them, as well as those who permanently abode in the city, to make known, in the various languages they have acquired, the glad tidings of salvation to all nations.

VER. 6. *When this was noised abroad*, &c. — When the sound as of a rushing mighty wind was heard in the vicinity, or, as some writers think, over all Jerusalem, it attracted a multitude to the spot where the disciples were assembled. This sound, or, as it is here called, a voice, was a supernatural phenomenon, that could only be described by comparing it to a rushing mighty wind. It was really the voice of Jehovah, announcing the coming of his Holy Spirit, and summoning the multitudes at Jerusalem to attend the first great meeting at the institution of the Christian Church, and listen to the truths of the gospel, that they may on this occasion hear in their own tongue, and that are destined to be preached in all the languages of the world.

And were confounded. — They were violently agitated and amazed to hear these men speaking with fluency and accuracy, all the languages and dialects represented in that vast crowd. Such a scene was never before witnessed in the history of mankind. We may imagine one whispering to another, "What does all this mean?"

VERS. 7, 8. *Are not all these that speak Galilæans?* — This increases their amazement that Galilæans, noted for their want of culture (John i. 46) and their corrupt dialect (Mark xiv. 70), should be thus able to speak in these foreign languages. The idea which has been advanced, that "these tongues were merely an ecstatic or impassioned style of discourse," is entirely dissipated by the inquiry, "How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?" The very language that they heard from their mothers' lips, they hear to-day, clearly presenting to them the truths of the gospel.

VER. 9. *Parthians and Medes*, &c. — We have here a list of fifteen countries, represented in the great assembly, lying in the North, East,

South, and West. Parthia was north of Asia, and north-east of Media and Hyrcania, the inhabitants being of the Scythian race, and celebrated in war as archers. They long resisted the aggressions of the Romans.

Media was bordered, north, by the Caspian Sea; south, by Persia, east, by Hyrcania; and west by Armenia. It was one of the most fertile and earliest cultivated of the kingdoms of Asia, covering a larger territory than that of Spain.

The Elamites descended from Elam, son of Shem (Gen. x. 22). Their country, Elymais, or Elam, was east of the Tigris, south of Media, and north of Susiana, whose capital was Shushan, where Daniel resided, in the province of Elam (Dan. viii. 2).

Dwellers in Mesopotamia. — Of those now dwelling in Jerusalem (ver. 5), some had been dwellers in Mesopotamia, a country lying between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, as the name signifies "between the rivers." It has been recently found that the languages anciently spoken in these regions were very various. Five or six varieties are brought to light in deciphering the Assyrian inscriptions, thus adding to the extent and force of these miraculous gifts.

Judæa. — Luke mentions Judæa, because he was writing in Rome, and following the geographical order of the countries from east to west. Besides, as the Galilæans were noted for a barbarous dialect, the Jews may have been amazed to hear them speaking pure Hebrew. Moreover, Luke's aim is to give all the languages that were spoken.

Cappadocia. — The largest ancient province of Asia Minor, where many Jews dwelt. It was bounded on the north by Pontus; on the south, by Mount Taurus; on the east, by the Euphrates and Armenia; and, on the west, by Galatia. The language spoken here was probably a compound of the Syriac and the Greek, which the apostles did not understand. Christianity was early introduced here (1 Pet. i. 1) among a people degraded and vicious.

Pontus. — The sea, so called from its bordering on the Black Sea. It was the north-eastern province of Asia Minor. The devoted Aquila was a native of Pontus (Acts xviii. 2); and here the gospel was made known at an early period (1 Pet. i. 1).

And Asia. — The western region of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus is the capital. See references to this region in Acts vi. 9, xvi. 6, xx. 16. Here the seven churches of Asia were located (Rev. i. 4) that St. John addressed.

VER. 10. *Phrygia and Pamphylia.* — Provinces of Asia Minor, where the Jews spoke the dialect of the Greeks. St. Paul twice travelled over Phrygia, preaching the gospel (Acts xvi. 6, xviii. 23), and visited, with Barnabas, Perga, the chief city of Pamphylia (Acts xiii. 13, xiv. 24, 25).

Egypt. — The language generally spoken in Egypt was Coptic. At Alexandria, two-fifths of the population were Jews. They had been encouraged to settle there by Alexander and Ptolemy Logus.

Libya about Cyrene. — Libya was an extensive region in Northern Africa, about five hundred miles west of Alexandria in Egypt. Cyrene was originally a Greek colony, and one of its principal cities. At this time the Jews constituted a fourth part of the population, and formed an independent body, with a governor of their own. It was the native place of Simon, who was compelled to bear our Saviour's

cross (Luke xxiii. 26). In Jerusalem the Jews of Cyrene were so numerous they had a synagogue of their own.

Strangers of Rome. — The Romans sojourning at Jerusalem. According to Josephus, there were so many Jews at Rome that they had eight synagogues there. The pilgrims at Jerusalem, who had come up to the feast, hear the gospel in the Latin tongues; and it is supposed that the converts founded the church to which Paul addressed his Epistle to the Romans.

Jews and proselytes. — The proselytes were formerly heathen, who had embraced Judaism. The Jews were noted for their zeal in making proselytes (Matt. xxiii. 15).

VER. 11. *Cretes and Arabians.* — These should properly have been introduced before the last general summary, as they were both of the native and proselyte class. Crete is a large island in the Mediterranean, now called Candia. It is celebrated by Homer for its hundred cities. Paul touched at this island on his way to Rome (Acts xxvii. 7, 8, 13); and Titus was left there to set in order things pertaining to the churches, and ordain elders (Tit. i. 5). The inhabitants were notorious for their treachery and immorality (Tit. i. 12, 13).

Arabia. — A country in Western Asia, lying south-east of Judæa. On the north, it is bounded by part of Syria; on the east, by the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates; on the south, by the Arabian Sea; and, on the west, by the Red Sea, Egypt, and Palestine. The country is divided into three parts, one of which, Arabia Petræa, though smaller than the others, is rich in historical associations. "The patriarch Job was familiar with its scenery. At Horeb, Moses saw the burning bush, and Elijah heard 'the still small voice.' In this great and terrible wilderness from Mount Sinai to the promised land, the Hebrews spent their forty years of wandering."

Do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. — One language was not expressive or forcible enough to describe the doctrines of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." One language was not sufficient to sound forth the high praises of the Author of our salvation. It needed all the tongues of the world to publish the glad tidings, and render the honor due to the divine Redeemer. The hymns of praise to his name require the peculiar strength and beauties of all languages, to express his divine excellencies, and his achievements for mankind.

LESSON III. — April 16.

Peter's Defence. — Acts ii. 12–28.

12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?
13. Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.
14. ¶ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
15. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day.
16. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
17. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
18. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:
19. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:
20. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
21. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:
23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:
24. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.
25. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:
26. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:
27. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
28. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Ver. 12. *They were all amazed and were in doubt.* — They were so astonished and bewildered, that they did not know what to say or to do. The more thoughtful in the great assembly inquired, one of another, "What meaneth this?" They earnestly sought an explanation of so unusual a phenomenon.

Ver. 13. *Others mocking said.* — There is, in every community, a class ready to scoff at religious things, and especially to turn into ridicule any unusual demonstrations of divine power. The arrows of truth are often warded off by a mocking spirit; and cavilling ripens into a habit that is destructive to the soul's dearest and eternal interests.

These men are full of new wine. — Thus the scoffers account for this great miracle. This is their solution of the perplexing question, "What meaneth this?" Such a charge is utterly devoid of reason, and almost self-contradictory. By new wine, was usually meant the sweet, unfermented juice of the grape; but the term was also applied to old wine preserved in its original state.

Ver. 14. *Peter standing up with the eleven.* — They all stood up together to bear their testimony to the Messiah, and to refute the slander that had been uttered. Peter, probably the first called to be

an apostle (Matt. iv. 18; Mark iii. 5), impulsive in his nature, bold and eloquent, takes the lead. He stands up, with the manly dignity and force of one who is under the strongest convictions of the truth.

Said unto them. — It may be that the other apostles spoke subsequently, to the same effect, in the various languages of those present. But Peter's address is the only one recorded, and he was doubtless the chief speaker. He "lifted up his voice," so that the thousands before him could distinctly hear and understand his earnest words. His voice, his manner, and solemn, distinct utterances, revealed his entire sobriety to all before him.

Ye men of Judæa, &c. — These opening words are designed to call the attention of the assembly to the important truths that are to be communicated. They are entreated to listen, and treasure up the knowledge in their hearts. Lange says, "He spoke, undoubtedly, in the Aramæan, the language of the country, which all the hearers could understand."

VER. 15. *These are not drunken.* — He repels the charge by referring to the early hour of the day, it being but the third hour, that is, between eight and nine o'clock by our time. The Jews divided the day, from sunrise to sunset, into twelve hours. The third, sixth, and ninth hours were set apart for public worship. It was a rule, with the Jews, not to eat or drink before the hour for morning prayer. Hence the improbability of any one being intoxicated at so early an hour. Besides, the "sweet wine" referred to would intoxicate only when taken in great excess. The coolness and discretion of Peter, in his reply, are worthy of notice. He does not charge the scoffers with malicious slander; but judiciously reasons with them, that they may see their error.

VER. 16. *But this is that,* &c. — He now affirms what the event is that has so excited their amazement. It is nothing less than a fulfilment of the divine promise made through the prophet Joel, eight centuries before. (See Joel ii. 28–32.) The prophecy was familiar to the Jews, and was calculated to make a deep impression upon the serious portion of the audience. The citation was the more striking, as the words had just been read in the Pentecostal service of the synagogue.

VER. 17. *In the last days,* &c. — "In the original it reads, '*after these things*,' a general expression pointing to an indistinct future. Peter, under the inspiration of God, defines it, by so altering the language in the quotation as to read, 'in the last days,' by which he shows that this is the last dispensation; and that this event, and the outpouring of the Spirit, is the beginning of the end. In ver. 29, accordingly, this is connected with the dissolution of the world as the completion of the last days." — *Jacobus.* "All the days of the new covenant," says Bengel, "are the last days, and these are already far advanced."

I will pour out of my Spirit.—The figure of pouring out as water, or rain, was often used as expressing the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Prov. i. 23; Isa. xliv. 3; Zech. xii. 10). In this case it was not given in drops, as under the ancient dispensation, but in copious showers, or streams, "which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit. iii. 6).

Upon all flesh. — Upon all classes of men, without distinction of age,

sex, or nation. As the rivers of salvation shall flow everywhere, so copious showers of the Divine Spirit shall fall, and converts be multiplied, until "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." The fulfilment of this promise was not confined to the day of Pentecost; but it is fulfilled in every season of revival, and in every work of grace in the hearts of men.

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. — A prophet was one who foretold future events, or was a teacher of the doctrines and duties of religion, or received special powers from God. In these gifts, females were to share, as well as males. Under the Jewish dispensation there were prophetesses; as, Miriam the sister of Aaron (Exod. xvi. 20), Deborah who judged Israel (Judg. iv. 4), and Huldah who lived in the reign of Josiah, and was consulted by the priests (2 Kings xxii. 14–20). In the New Testament we find Anna, a prophetess, teaching the people (Luke ii. 36–38); and Philip the evangelist had four daughters "who did prophesy" (Acts xxi. 8, 9).

Your young men shall see visions. — God often made revelations to his servants by visions. There was the vision of Isaiah which he saw concerning Judah (Isa. i. 1), the vision of dry bones beheld by Ezekiel (Ezek. xxxvii. 8). Micah saw the word of the Lord concerning Samaria and Jerusalem (Mic. i. 1); and St. John records in the Book of Revelation "all things that he saw" (Rev. i. 2). The Lord spake to Ananias in a vision (Acts ix. 10), whom Paul "saw in a vision" (Acts ix. 11, 12). Cornelius saw in a vision the angel of God coming to him (Acts x. 3).

Your old men shall dream dreams. — Another medium of communicating the divine will was through dreams. The angel of the Lord spake to Jacob in a dream (Gen. xxxi. 11). Thus God came to Laban (Gen. xxxi. 24). All are familiar with Joseph's dream (Gen. xxxvii. 5) and Pharaoh's dream (Gen. xli. 1). See also Matt. i. 20, ii. 19, &c. The idea is, that God would reveal himself to all classes, male and female, young and old.

VER. 18. *Servants and handmaidens.* — Even persons of servile condition, and all in the humblest walks of life, are included in these promises. They may become the Lord's freemen, and honored servants of Christ.

VERS. 19, 20. *And I will show wonders*, &c. — In these verses we have a vivid presentation of the terrible judgments with which the enemies of God will be visited. The Pentecostal fire, that quickened and inspired God's servants, will be turned into the "fire of judgment" (Isa. x. 17); and instead of this day of grace will come the day of God's wrath. "These wonders of wrath were foreshadowed when Israel nailed his king to the cross; for the sun was then turned into darkness. These wonders were repeated with still more power at the destruction of Jerusalem. *Blood, fire, and vapor of smoke* filled the city. The light of the moon became red as blood when it fell upon the pools of blood in the streets; and the sun has, since that day, withheld its healthful light from that desolated country." — *Lange.* But when the Lord shall have subdued the nations, and all things shall have been put under his feet, then will these tokens be repeated on a far wider scale, and with a more terrible significance.

VER. 21. *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* — How wide and far-reaching is this proclamation of mercy!

Over how many classes of sinners, and degrees of sin, does it fly as an angel of hope! How simple is the condition of salvation!—"Call upon the name of the Lord." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. x. 12).

VER. 22. *Ye men of Israel.* — Peter now goes on to show that Jesus of Nazareth is this Lord referred to in the prophecies; that he is the true Messiah whom they should believe in and accept.

A man approved of God among you. — Rather, a man demonstrated, or accredited unto you, as being what he claimed to be, "by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him." None but God the Father, whom you believe in and worship, could have done these miracles. Christ himself attributes his miracles indiscriminately to the operation of the Father (John v. 30, 36). and to his own power (John ii. 11), thus presenting his perfect unity with the Father. He declares, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

As ye yourselves know. — You are as well acquainted with these facts as we are. These miracles were not performed in a corner, but publicly in the presence of multitudes of the people. The Jews did not deny the reality of these miracles, which from their hostility to Jesus they would gladly have done; but, while admitting them, either ascribed them to the agency of Beelzebub (Matt. ix. 34), or charged him with breaking the sabbath by working them (John v. 16).

VER. 23. *Him being delivered.* — The crucifixion of Christ was not an event that happened by chance, or by a power wrested from the hands of the Father, but "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." It was in accordance with the divine plan. It was foreknown. God's knowledge extends to all events, past, present, and future. Omniscience is an essential attribute of his divine being. It was by the definite counsel, or determination, of God, who is governed in all his acts by infinite wisdom and goodness. Our Saviour, in speaking of his approaching death, says, "And truly the Son of man goeth as *it was determined*" (Luke xxii. 22).

Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified. — God's secret determination did not affect their freedom of action. They voluntarily, prompted by their evil passions, took Christ, and by their wicked hands crucified him. They knew that they acted without any compulsion, and that the guilt of this deed rested upon them. The doctrines of God's decrees and man's free agency are both distinctly taught in the Holy Scriptures. God must be a sovereign, doing his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, in order to maintain his throne, and fulfil his benevolent designs; in order, in fact, to be God. Man must be free in order to be a reasonable and accountable being, capable of serving God, and attaining the highest happiness. If any persons cannot harmonize these two doctrines, this is not proof that they cannot be harmonized. To destroy either would be fatal to God's moral kingdom.

VER. 24. *Whom God hath raised up.* — The apostle shows the great importance he attaches to the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, by discoursing so fully upon it in the verses that follow. The two main points he presents are, first, the fact of the resurrection; and, secondly, that it was in accordance with the well-known prophecy of

David. This doctrine is the keystone to the arch that sustains the whole system of Christian truth. It gives significance and power to the sufferings and death of Christ, and completeness to his whole history as supernatural and divine.

Having loosed the pains of death. — Although commentators differ, yet many are of the opinion that the Greek word translated "pains" should be translated "bonds," "and that reference is had to the situation of the dead, and of Christ in the grave; as if bound down under the chains of death, and restrained from rising again to life. In the resurrection of Christ, God loosed, dissolved, these bonds, and let the captive of death go free." "*For it was not possible he should be holden of it.*" It was not possible, because his resurrection had been predicted, and "he had life in himself" (John v. 26), and was the "Prince of life."

VER. 25. *For David speaketh concerning him.* — The reference the apostle makes is to the prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ contained in Ps. xvi. 8-11. Here David speaks in the person of the Messiah, though a part of the language is expressive of his own feelings.

I foresaw (*saw*) *the Lord always before me.* — I had a continual sense of his presence, and an abiding faith in him, and a love that led me ever to repose in perfect confidence upon him; surely a most desirable and delightful state of mind for us all to attain.

For he is on my right hand. — The right hand is the position of power and honor (see Ps. cx. 1, cxxi. 5). The Lord is his supporter and defender. He is near to act at once in his behalf. *That I should not be moved;* that is, he would not be alarmed or agitated by any calamity, or overcome by any temptation. He expresses the same feeling in Ps. cxxv. 1: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever." There is also the sweet assurance, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3).

VER. 26. *Therefore did my heart rejoice.*—A successful termination of severe conflicts is a source of great joy. In the presence of God there is fulness of joy.

My flesh shall rest in hope.— "My flesh will not be dissipated or corrupted, but will calmly rest in the hope and expectation of rising again." The language is expressive of not simply the possibility, but the certainty, of a resurrection. Those who fall asleep in Jesus have the assurance, that, though with them dust returns to dust, yet the day is coming when corruption shall put on incorruption, and the mortal put on immortality.

VER. 27. *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.* — Or, hades, a general term for the state of disembodied spirits, or of the invisible world, without reference to the happiness or misery. There is another term, Gehenna, which means hell as a place of fiery punishment (see Matt. v. 22; Luke xii. 5). In reference to Christ, the triumphal expression is used: "Thou wilt not leave me among the dead."

Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.— The Scriptures apply these words to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to no one else. All others are consigned to dust and corruption. The Holy One shall not decay, or return to dust, but shall spring to life again.

Ver. 28. *Thou hast made known to me the ways of life.*—Thou hast opened to me the paths from death to life. Also, all the ways in which Christ walked in his humiliation and exaltation were paths of life to those who believe in him, — paths to immortal life and happiness.

Thou shalt make me full of joy. — The glorious termination of a life of sacrifice and love. "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2).

LESSON IV. — April 23.

The Early Christian Church. — Acts ii. 37–47.

37. ¶ Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?
38. Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
39. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.
40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
41. ¶ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.
42. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
43. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.
44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
45. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.
46. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,
47. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Peter, in closing his address, made the following impressive appeal to the understanding of his hearers: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36). He has demonstrated to them from the Scriptures, from the signs and wonders they had seen and heard, and from fulfilled prophecies, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. He appeals to their hearts and consciences, by showing them their sin in crucifying him, and pointing out the way of salvation through the same Jesus, whom God hath made both Lord and Christ. The testimony, therefore, is complete, that Jesus Christ lives, and is exalted to heaven, and has fulfilled his promise to give the Holy Spirit, "which ye now see and hear."

Ver. 7. *When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.*— The truth to which they had listened, like a sharp-pointed instrument, pierced their hearts, and caused them pain. They saw in a new light the part they had taken in the crucifixion of Christ. They were convinced that this person was the adorable Messiah. They saw their danger in having incurred the displeasure of the Almighty. They had the sense of sin, that is the beginning of repentance.

Men and brethren, what shall we do? — How great and sudden was the change wrought in their feelings towards the disciples of Christ! — no longer despised Galilæans, or drunk with wine, but brethren, asked to point out to them the way of escape from the wrath of God.

Ver. 38. *Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.* — Peter followed the instructions of his Lord, who said, just before his ascension, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47). True repentance involves deep sorrow for sin, and the purpose to break off from every sinful course, and lead a life of holy obedience

to God, with a humble reliance upon divine help. By receiving baptism they express their faith in Christ as the Messiah, and consecrate themselves to his service. They had some knowledge of the rite of baptism; so that it was not necessary to explain this ordinance to them.

For the remission of sins. — We are not released from our sins, or pardoned, through the ordinance of baptism, but by the power of Christ, in whose name we are baptized. His love and mercy are the sources of our forgiveness. *And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* If they had exercised true repentance and faith, these were the result of the influence of the Spirit on their hearts. But they should receive the gift in full measure, as it was then poured out upon believers. For the promises of the gifts of the Spirit, see John xvi. 8–10; Gal. v. 22–24.

VER. 39. *For the promise is unto you, &c.* — The promise of the Spirit was the great promise of the Old Testament. This gift, with all its attendant spiritual blessings, is promised to them and to their children, and to all that are afar off; to the scattered Jews and heathen nations, even as many as God shall call into the kingdom of the Messiah. How far the mercy of God reaches, appears from John x. 16; Gal. iii. 28; Eph. ii. 14–17; Rom. x. 11, 12.

VER. 40. *And with many other words did he testify and exhort.* — The whole discourse of Peter is not given to us by Luke. Following the line of argument already indicated, the preacher continued to accumulate testimony, and to press the truth home, with fervent exhortations, upon the hearts and consciences of his hearers. — "*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*" Separate yourselves from those of this crooked or evil generation, who reject and oppose the Messiah. Withdraw from their wicked influence; cling to the truth, and follow Christ. The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in a soul that yields to the corrupting influences of society.

VER. 41. *They that gladly received the word were baptized.* — The gospel is good news, — glad tidings; and those who receive it as such, and cordially embrace its truths and hopes, are ready to receive baptism, and thus profess their faith to the world. On this memorable day about three thousand souls, or persons, were added to the Christian Church. The conviction of this multitude was instantaneous; their repentance was immediate and sincere, followed by true faith in Christ, and the administration of the ordinance of baptism. Such was the divine blessing that followed one faithful gospel sermon. Oh for similar outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon our congregations, who listen sabbath after sabbath to the truth as it is in Jesus!

VER. 42. *And they continued steadfastly, &c.* — We have here a description of the Christian life of these newly converted persons. Four essential elements of Christian unity and devotion are mentioned. 1st, They steadfastly adhered to the doctrines taught by the apostles, that they might become firmly established in the truth. They accepted their teachings as the immovable foundation on which "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. ii. 21). 2d, They maintained Christian fellowship, being bound together by warm sympathy and love. Thus they manifested the Christian law, that "every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John v. 1). 3d, They

adhered to the religious meals, which were concluded with the Lord's Supper, thus deriving encouragement and strength from these important means of grace. 4th, They attended to the duty of prayer, without which none can grow in grace, or in the knowledge of the Lord. "Pray without ceasing," is the command to all the disciples of Jesus. This, too, is the highest privilege of man.

VER. 43. *And fear came upon every soul.* — A religious awe spread over the entire community. Those who had derided the apostles were silenced by the tokens of the divine presence and power, by which they were surrounded. They had heard of the judgments with which the rebellious Jews in the past had been visited; and they had reason to fear a repetition of them upon themselves.

VER. 44. *All that believed were together, and had all things common.* — They met together in the temple, and in private houses, for the worship of God. They formed a distinct society, having common sympathies and interests. Those who remained in Jerusalem after the feast may for a time have met at the same place, or in different bands in various parts of the city. Their Christian love led them also to part with their property, to relieve the needy. This "community of goods" among the primitive Christians had no resemblance to the modern fanatical idea of "communism," that brings all down to the same level. Dr. Bloomfield says, "Some of the rich sold their property, in order to have more to give immediately to their poorer brethren; but the money accruing thence did not cease to be at their own disposal" (see Acts v. 4). That all did not sell their property, is apparent from the fact, that, soon afterwards, there were rich and poor among the Christians. Dorcas had property that enabled her to be "full of good works and alms-deeds" (Acts ix. 36. See also Acts xi. 29, xx. 35; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2).

VER. 45. *Sold their possessions*, &c. — As far as it was necessary to meet the necessities of their poorer brethren. Barnes says, "The passage does not mean that they sold all their possessions, or that they relinquished their title to all their property; but they so far regarded all as common, as to be willing to part with it, if it was needed, to supply the wants of others."

VER. 46. *Continued daily with one accord in the temple.* — We have an account of three appointed hours for prayer. (See Ps. lv. 18; Dan. 6, 11). The regular hours in the temple were usually but two: at nine o'clock in the morning, called the "third hour;" and three o'clock in the afternoon, called the "ninth hour." Peter and John went up at the ninth hour for prayer (Acts iii. 1). They met with one accord, that is, in pious harmony, to unite their earnest supplications to God.

Breaking bread from house to house, — i.e., in their homes, as distinct from the temple, they celebrated the Lord's Supper. Mention is made of the church in the house, in Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15). Their private dwellings were consecrated as temples of the living God. They "did eat their meat with gladness." Religion was their constant joy, and diffused happiness through the whole family circle. The humblest fare awakened their gratitude and thanksgiving to the Source of every blessing.

VER. 47. *Praising God.* — Besides praising him for common mercies, they "were habitually occupied in acts and services of social

praise. The early Christians are described by Pliny, in the opening of the second century, as singing hymns to Christ with each other." Paul exhorts the Colossians to admonish "one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing, with grace in your hearts, to the Lord" (Col. iii. 16. See also Eph. v. 19).

The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. — Rather the saved, or those who were saved. The harmony, the brotherly kindness, the cheerfulness, of these Christians, impressed others with the beauty and excellencies of the religion of Jesus, and were agencies, blessed of God, to bring them into the fold. In the absence of a Christian literature, such as abounds in our day, they were living epistles known and read of all men. Their lives and characters were ministers of the gospel to the perishing around them.

Thus the establishment of the Pentecostal Church was the commencement of a new period in the kingdom of God. It was new in the manner in which it was founded; new in the inner unity, love, and joy, and in the outer life, of its members; new in its spiritual influences upon society and the world.

LESSON V. — April 30.

The Lame Man Healed. — Acts iii. 1–11.

1. Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*.
2. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;
3. Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms.
4. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.
5. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.
6. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.
7. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.
8. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.
9. And all the people saw him walking and praising God:
10. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.
11. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

In the scenes of the last lesson, we have the fulfilment of Christ's promise to the believer, "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father" (John xiv. 12). In this lesson we have the fulfilment of another promise found in Mark xvi. 18.

Ver. 1. *Peter and John went up together.* — These two apostles, though differing in age and character, are yet closely united in Christian friendship, and often appear together. They remind us that Christ sent forth his disciples "by two and two" (Mark vi. 7), and afford a commendable example of ministerial unity and friendship. They went up to "the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour," or three o'clock in the afternoon. It was the custom of the apostles and Jewish Christians, when in Jerusalem, to attend at the regular hours of prayer in the temple, which was the sanctuary for the entire nation. They did not entertain the thought of withdrawing from the services of the ancient religion, and establishing a new sect; but they participated in these services with as much punctuality and earnestness as any others. In their private homes, however, they formed a society by themselves, celebrating here the Lord's Supper, and engaging in forms of devotion that in time developed into Christian worship.

Ver. 2. *A man lame from his mother's womb.* — Hence the miracle wrought upon him was the greater, and there was no room for deception. The friends of this man were in the habit of carrying him daily to this spot in the morning, and carrying him back at evening. As there were no hospitals or almshouses before the introduction of Christianity, the Jews and Gentiles were accustomed to place beggars at the portals of temples, or at the gates of the rich, as in the case of Lazarus (Luke xvi. 20). Persons passing in and out of the temple might be supposed, under the influence of their devotions, to contribute liberally to the suffering poor.

At the gate called Beautiful. — This is the only source of information that we have of a gate bearing that name. Josephus mentions nine gates covered with silver and gold, and describes one called Nicanor's Gate; the most magnificent and costly of all, covered with bass-relief lily-work of Corinthian brass. It formed the eastern entrance to the temple, towards Kedron, fronting the entrance to the holy place, or the sanctuary. Being more frequented than any other, the lame man was laid at this particular gate.

VER. 3. *Seeing Peter and John, asked an alms.* — It did not enter the mind of the poor cripple, to ask for any thing more than a mere pittance to help him in his infirmity. He did not know that he was addressing the special servants of God, who delights to give exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or even think.

VER. 4. *Peter fastened his eyes upon him.* — Being moved by the pitiable and helpless condition of the cripple, he, with John, looked upon him with that tender sympathy that is produced by the love of Jesus in the heart. *Look on us.* — This was said to gain his confidence, and awaken his hope that something was to be done in his behalf.

VER. 5. *He gave heed unto them.* — It was an unusual occurrence for those who cast a mite at his feet to stop and look upon him, and make such a request as Peter did. Their interest awakened his interest, and doubtless excited his expectation of receiving a large sum of money. Christ says to the perishing, "Look unto me, and be saved." Faithful pastors say to the spiritually poor and blind, "Look on us." "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20).

VER. 6. *Silver and gold have I none.* — This is apostolic, "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. vi. 10). "Peter, though poor in gold, was richer than all the rich: richer than all who bear dazzling titles, and receive large incomes. He possessed faith in the power of the name of Jesus Christ, and with this he accomplished far more than if Christ had assigned to him the revenue of a kingdom, or an ecclesiastical territory, as his wages." — *Gossner.*

But such as I have give I thee. — Peter at once extinguishes, in the cripple's mind, the hope of obtaining money; but he gives him what he has. Freely he has received; freely he gives.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. — "And his name shall be called *Wonderful;*" wonderful in grace and power. A wonderful blessing to those who can thus use it! Peter's faith prompts him to thus speak to the cripple. Faith, united to the name of Jesus, can do all things. No one can estimate the loss of power to the members of the church, through want of faith.

VERS. 7, 8. *And he took him by the right hand.* — Acts must accompany words. The human unites with the divine. *And lifted him up.* — In that moment the lame man's limbs were touched, as by an electric shock, and he received strength from the Almighty. He leaps with a freedom that he never before felt. He can stand, and he can walk. His restoration is instantaneous and complete. The prophecy is literally fulfilled, "The lame man shall leap as a hart" (Isa. xxxv. 6.)

And entered with them into the temple. — He does not hasten to his

home, but first enters, with his benefactors, the sanctuary of God, to give thanks and praises for the divine goodness so signally shown to him. He walked about the court of the temple, leaping, and praising God.

VER. 9. *All the people saw him.* — The priests, and the people who had assembled at that hour for prayer, saw the miracle that had been wrought. It was not done in a corner, but was a public spectacle for all to look upon. It was designed to affect others, as well as the individual who was healed.

VER. 10. *And they knew that it was he which sat for alms.* — Of this fact there was not the slightest doubt. They had often seen the cripple stationed at the gate; and they recognize the very same, in the happy man now before them. The man is now forty years old (Acts iv. 22), and has been lame from his birth. The event creates the most profound amazement among the spectators. One design of the miracle was to astonish them; to arouse their attention to the power and blessings of Christianity, that they might seek them for themselves.

VER. 11. *The man held Peter and John.* — He clung to them with strong affection, and thus testified to all who were present, that these were his benefactors. The news of the miracle spread rapidly; and "*all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's.*" The temple was surrounded by a range of cloisters, above which were galleries supported by pillars of white marble, each pillar being a single block of stone twenty-five cubits in height. The colonnade, or series of columns, and gallery, that fronted the Mount of Olives on the east, was called Solomon's Porch, because it stood on a vast terrace which he had originally raised from a valley beneath, by a wall five hundred feet in height, of solid masonry. It was the only part of Solomon's original work which remained in the second temple." — *Peirce.* Here where the apostles often met (Acts v. 12), and where Jesus walked (John x. 23), the crowd flocked, filled with astonishment at what they saw had taken place.

LESSON VI. — May 7.

The Power of Jesus' Name. — Acts iii. 12-26.

12. ¶ And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go.

14. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15. And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16. And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

18. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19. ¶ Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21. Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

After the lame man had been healed, and Peter noticed the astonishment and excitement that the event had awakened in the minds of the people, he delivered to them the following address, which consists of two parts, — 1st, explanations concerning the Author and purpose of the miracle (vers. 12–18); 2d, an exhortation to repentance and conversion, that their sins may be blotted out, and that they may secure the privileges and blessings of the covenant that God made with Abraham and their fathers.

Ver. 12. *Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this?* — Why are you, men of Israel, who have seen signs and wonders from God, so astonished at this event? *Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power*, by a miraculous energy residing in us, or by our holiness, *we had made this man to walk?* We disclaim the possession of all such power, or such meritorious ability of the soul. The work is purely of God, and to him belongs all the glory.

Ver. 13. *The God of Abraham hath glorified his Son.* — Their false impressions being removed, Peter now sets forth the truth by bringing before their minds the Author of the miracle, and its design and significance. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the same God who revealed himself through their fathers, now reveals himself

to us through his Son. The old covenant, in the advantages of which they participated, was the type and foundation of the new covenant, the higher blessings of which are now offered to them.

Whom ye delivered up and denied. — Peter had himself denied his Master; but having repented, and received forgiveness, he had great boldness in rebuking others for this sin. They denied him in the presence of Pilate, in the presence of a heathen governor who sought to release him. Their sin and guilt are the more marked, as they pressed the murder of the Messiah against the wishes of a Pagan *who was determined to let him go* (see Luke xxiii. 16; John xix. 4). Pilate made five distinct, and, as we believe, sincere efforts, to save Jesus, in the face of the storm of passion and the wild cries of Israel, "Away with him, crucify him!"

VER. 14. *Ye denied the Holy One, and desired a murderer.* — This was another element of the enormity of their sin, that when Christ, the Holy One and the Just, and Barabbas the murderer, were presented to them, they chose the latter. The contrast of these representative characters is strongly put, that they may see themselves as God sees them. The title of Jesus, "the Holy One," is found in Ps. xvi. 10, and cited in Acts ii. 27. Stephen called him "the Just One" (Acts vii. 52), and Ananias, in Acts xxii. 14. This title of the Messiah the audience would easily recognize, and see what they had done in demanding the crucifixion of such a holy being, and calling for the release of a robber, a leader of sedition, and a murderer.

VER. 15. *And killed the Prince of life.* — Ye chose a murderer, one who took away life, and killed the Author, or Source of life (comp. John v. 21, 25, 26). Christ says of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). The term "prince" means "leader," as in Isa. lv. 4: "Behold, I have given him for a leader and commander to the people." Christ is called in Acts v. 31 "a Prince and a Saviour;" and, in Heb. ii. 10, the "Prince, or Captain of salvation." He is the Prince of life, because he introduced into the world spiritual and eternal life (John i. 4), and guides his followers to this glorious life in his Father's kingdom.

Whom God hath raised from the dead.—His resurrection is the proof that he is the "Prince of life." In raising him from the dead, the God of Abraham their father put upon his work his divine seal. Of this great essential truth of the new dispensation, Peter says, "we are witnesses."

VER. 16. *Through faith in his name.* — In accounting for this miracle, Peter declares that it was wrought by the divine power of Him whom they had wickedly put to death, but who was now active in the world as the risen Saviour. Faith in his name was the means; and the name, or the being represented by the name, was the efficient cause. Without the exercise of the divine power of the Prince of life, the lame man would not have been cured. Without the faith of the apostles in that power, he would not have been cured. There may have been awakened in the mind of the cripple a faith, or at least confidence in Christ, at the moment Peter called upon him in the name of Jesus Christ to rise up and walk. He had probably heard of him before, if he had not seen him. Of his faith after he was healed, there can be no doubt.

The faith which is by him.—"The faith in himself, which Jesus had

produced in their minds by his teachings, miracles, promises, and by his Spirit," *hath given him this perfect soundness*, this complete cure, *in the presence of you all.* The miracle was as clear as the sunlight to all whom he addressed. It could not be denied. It could not be reasoned away.

VER. 17. *And now, brethren.* — Notwithstanding their guilt, he addresses them in a strain of conciliation and tenderness. *I wot,* — I am well aware, — *through ignorance ye did it:* as Christ himself said on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34); and as Paul said of the *rulers*, "For, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). Speaking of his own persecutions, he says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13). In his case, however, as with those whom Peter addressed, this unbelief was sinful. Their pride and prejudices kept them from the light and knowledge, that would have produced belief. Men are often guilty for their ignorance, as well as for the wicked deeds that ignorance leads them to commit.

VER. 18. *But those things which God before had showed by . . . his prophets.* — The predictions of Christ's sufferings by his prophets *he hath so fulfilled.* They are fulfilled by the murderous rejection of Christ on the part of the rulers. Thus he caused the wrath of man to praise him. Joseph's brethren were verily guilty in their cruel treatment of him, yet he could say (Gen. l. 20), "But, as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." The carrying-forward of the amazing plan of salvation through the accurate fulfilment of ancient prophecies, and the employment of the devices of wicked men to promote God's glory and the highest good of the human family, are convincing proofs of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

VER. 19. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted.* — In view of the miracle they had witnessed, which was a new and most impressive proof that the Prince of life was now a living and acting power in the world, they are exhorted to repent of their sins, and turn to God. The cry with which the gospel was ushered in was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Repentance denotes a change of heart: conversion, a change of life.

That your sins may be blotted out. — In Isa. xliv. 22, God says, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." The reference is to the mode of expunging from a book, or tablet; or crossing out, and thus cancelling, a debt. The ancients, who wrote upon tablets covered with wax, when they desired to blot out what they had written, drew over it the flat end of their pen, and thus obliterated it. The term here rendered "blotted out" occurs in Col. ii. 14; Rev. iii. 5, vii. 17. All who repent of sin, and turn to Christ, will have their sins obliterated, and their souls cleansed by his precious blood.

When the times of refreshing shall come. — A more literal rendering of the passage is, "In order that the time of refreshing may come." Various interpretations have been given to these words. To a truly penitent and converted person, there comes a time of refreshing, a breathing time, a rest from the weariness and troubles of life. Others suppose the reference is to the whole period of the kingdom of grace,

when Christ will give to all his true disciples peace and joy, and the blessings of holy communion with himself. Others regard it as pointing to the glorious times of the Church, under the literal reign of Christ, expected by the apostles and Jewish disciples, as indicated by the question put to the Master before the ascension, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6.) The true believer may experience "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," and may, by earnest efforts, hasten the coming of the "times of restoration," the glorious consummation when the kingdom of Christ will be the universal kingdom on the earth.

VER. 20. *And he shall send Jesus Christ.* — This is in accordance with the announcement of the angels at the time of the ascension (Acts i. 11): "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Then shall follow the restoration, or restitution, of all things, predicted by the holy prophets.

VER. 21. *Whom the heaven must receive* until these times of restitution. It is a part of the grand design of the world's redemption, that the Lord of glory should remain in the heavens till his second advent to restore all things. From that exalted position he sends the Comforter. He pours out his Spirit upon his Church. He comes and abides in individual hearts. He uses various agencies for the extension of his kingdom, and is preparing for the blessed consummation spoken of by all his prophets *since the world began.* By the terms "restitution," or restoration, we are not to understand simply a return to a condition of things that formerly existed; but a renewal of all things, that will far transcend what has even been previously enjoyed. Nor can Israel alone claim this exalted and happy condition, for the promises extend to all the nations of the earth.

VER. 22. *For Moses truly said unto the fathers.* — The apostle, after speaking generally of the predictions of the prophets concerning Christ, now mentions a name that has great influence over his hearers; and, by associating Moses and the Messiah, his arguments in favor of the latter carry with them great weight. *A prophet shall the Lord raise up like unto me* (Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19). Moses foretold the appearance of a succession of prophets, that culminated in Christ the greatest of the prophets. He was looked upon, and called *that prophet* (John i. 21). Each prophet prefigured him, and uttered promises of his coming. But none fulfilled the prophecy, "like unto Moses," but Jesus Christ. The points of the similarity between them are many. God sent Moses to speak and to do all that he commanded: the Father sent his Son unto the world to do his will. Moses instituted the Jewish Church: Christ established the Christian Church. Moses was commissioned to deliver the Israelites from bondage, and lead them to the promised land: Christ came to free men from the bondage of sin, and lead them to the heavenly Canaan. The law of right and justice came by Moses: the law of love came by Jesus Christ. Moses was a mediator under the old covenant; Christ, a mediator under the new covenant. But Christ is as much superior to Moses as the divine is superior to the human.

Him shall ye hear in all things. — If the venerated prophet spoke with authority, how much more did Christ speak "as one having authority!" And, if the Jews were under obligations to listen to the

words of Moses, how much more should they attend to Him who had "the words of eternal life!"

VER. 23. *Every soul that will not hear that prophet.* — Every one who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ, or refuses to accept his teachings, shall be cut off from the privileges of the people of God. This was the severest punishment that could be inflicted upon a Jew. It at once removed him from all participation in the rites of his national religion, severed him from the benefits of God's covenant with his people, and made him a stranger and a heathen (Num. xv. 30. 31; Lev. vii. 21). In the New Testament, the fearful doom of those who "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" is expressed in the words, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. i. 9. 10).

VER. 24. *And all the prophets from Samuel.* — Here Peter re-affirms the unity of all the prophets in foretelling the glorious times of the Church under the Messiah's reign. Samuel was regarded as the first great prophet after Moses, and at the head of the regular line of prophets as an established order. He founded a school of the prophets (1 Sam. xix. 20). The importance which our Lord attached to the prophecies appears in the record of his conversation in the walk to Emmaus. "And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke xiv. 27).

VER. 25. *Ye are the children of the prophets.* — As though he had said, "Of all the people on the face of the earth, you should readily and cordially accept the benefits that Christ brings. For these prophets are your ancestors; and they were inspired, and taught and prophesied, for your guidance and improvement. Also, you are the children *of the covenant which God made with our fathers.* By natural descent this covenant is yours, with the distinguished privileges and blessings that it embraced." Hence they were under the most obligations to believe in Christ, the seed of Abraham, who had come to bless *all the kindred of the earth.* The covenant itself could not save them any more than the religion of our fathers can save us. There must be the exercise of personal faith in Christ, in order to be saved by him.

VER. 26. *Unto you first.* — To them the call to repentance and faith was first made, in accordance with the charge given to the apostles, to begin their work at Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 47). To them God first sends his beloved Son to bless them *in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.* This was a far greater blessing than temporal power, or national advantage or exaltation. Their connection with the prophets, or being included by the covenant in the outward pale of the Church, would avail them nothing while they were under the power of sin. They must accept Christ, whose "blood cleanseth from all sin."

LESSON VII. — MAY 14.

CHRISTIAN COURAGE. — ACTS iv. 8–22.

8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9. If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10. Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

13. ¶ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16. Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*.

17. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18. And they called them, and commauded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.

22. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

The miracle that had been wrought upon the lame man, and the address of Peter that followed, having both deeply impressed the people, the hostility of the Jewish authorities is naturally excited. The kingdom of light never advances upon the kingdom of darkness without a severe conflict. But from these conflicts the truth is brought out with increased power; and its advocates are disciplined and strengthened for further advances and victories. The last lesson was a gospel address brought forth by the astonishment of the people. In this we have another address, brought forth by the hostility of the authorities. While they were speaking, there *came upon them* the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees (see Acts iv. 1). The priests were offended because these men were attempting to teach the people without having been educated in the rabbinical schools, and without authority from them. They regarded the act as an invasion of their privileges; and they moved against the apostles, led by "the captain of the temple." The priests and Levites acted as guards of the temple; and this was a Jewish, and not a Roman, officer, whom they took as their leader. The Sadducees were enraged because the apostles preached the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which they denied.

The offenders were seized and imprisoned; and yet conversions were multiplied to the number of five thousand. The next day they

were brought before a most imposing council, representing the power, wealth, and official authority of the Jewish nation. Being placed "in the midst," with the eyes of seventy-two councillors, and numerous distinguished visitors resting upon them, they were asked, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" (Acts iv. 3–7.)

VER. 8. *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost.* — This language expresses a special miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost, in accordance with the promises, that, when the apostles were arraigned before rulers, the Spirit would teach them what to say (see Luke xii. 12, xxi. 14, 15).

Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel. — By thus addressing his judges, Peter acknowledges them as the authorized heads and representatives of the people of Israel. Speaking to them, he feels that he is addressing the whole nation. The elders were anciently the chiefs of the tribes, and from the beginning were rulers of the people (Exod. xii. 21).

This high court before which Peter appeared, called the Sanhedrim, consisted of seventy or seventy-two senators, made up of the chief priests, the elders, or presbyters, and scribes, writers and teachers of the law. The high priest was president, who determined the most important affairs of the nation.

VER. 9. *If we this day be examined.* — If you sincerely desire to know by what means this good deed, this miracle of mercy, has been performed, then listen to the direct answer we are ready to give.

VER. 10. *Be it known unto you all.* The apostle, spiritually invigorated and toned up by the persecutions through which he was passing, boldly takes his stand before this high court of the nation. The efforts of the rulers to silence him result, through providential direction, in giving him an opportunity to testify for Christ, and preach to them a gospel sermon. We cannot see how such an opportunity could have been obtained in any other way. First, he states to them, and through them "to all the people of Israel," that "by the name, or power, of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," the despised name that followed him to the cross, *doth this man stand here before you whole.* Second, he brings home to them the guilty part they took in the crucifixion of Christ. Third, In the face of the Sadducees, he declares the fact of Christ's resurrection. He had already charged upon the Jewish people the crime of crucifixion (see Acts ii. 23, iii. 14, 15); and now he boldly exposes the criminality of those who urged on the people, and pressed Pilate to pronounce the sentence of death.

VER. 11. *This is the stone.* — The prophetic passage in Ps. cxviii. 22 is here applied to Christ. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner." That is, Christ *which was set at nought, repudiated by you builders* (you priests and scribes officially appointed to be the builders of the Jewish Church), has become the chief corner-stone of the whole building, or church. This passage Christ applies to himself (see Matt. xxi. 42). It is also referred to in Eph. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 4–6.

VER. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other.* — The apostle, in a beautiful manner, turns from Christ's healing power over the body, to the salvation he provides for the soul. He points to his name as the only name under heaven *whereby we must be saved.* The power

of that name will one day banish all sickness, sorrow, and want, regenerate the moral nature of the race, and consummate the restitution of all things.

VER. 13. *When they saw the boldness of Peter and John*, — i. e., their unembarrassed manner, and perfect openness and freedom of speech, and that they were without professional learning or culture, — they were astonished. Their persecuting spirit was turned to wonder at what they heard from such men. The term translated *ignorant men* means private men, in distinction from magistrates, or public teachers. It also means men in humble life. Their attention being aroused, and thus their memory being quickened, *they took knowledge of them*; rather, they recognized them as having been seen in the company of Jesus. These two apostles were present in the judgment-hall at the time Christ was tried before the same Sanhedrim (John xviii. 15, 16). The judges may have recognized in them the spirit of Jesus, the same meekness, self-reliance, respect for office, and the same bold, clear, and direct mode of discourse.

VER. 14. *And beholding the man that was healed standing with them.* — This was an argument that perfectly confounded them. There stood the man who had been healed, after having been, as multitudes knew, for forty years a cripple (ver. 22). They had been accustomed to see him lying on the ground, begging. Now he stands before them, in the joyous consciousness that he is perfectly healed. He says nothing. It is not necessary for him to speak a word. His very posture is incontestable evidence of the reality of the miracle.

VERS. 15, 16. *When they had commanded them to go aside.* — The examination being ended, and the evidence being all taken, the apostles, with the man whom they had healed, were requested to retire. Then *they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men?"* A very difficult question *for them* to decide. That a remarkable miracle had been wrought by these apostles, the judges could not deny. The fame of it had spread too far to be now stopped. The greatest obstacle in the way of a righteous decision of the case was their own stubborn will. They love darkness, rather than light. The truth of Christianity is before them in this miracle. *They could say nothing against* the miracle; and yet they would not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved.

VER. 17. *That it spread no further . . . let us threaten them.* They did not dare to inflict punishment upon men whose only crime was an act of benevolence; and yet they hoped to hush up the matter. For the great cause of vexation and fear to these rulers was the name of Jesus of Nazareth. If that name continues to increase in power, and proofs unanswerable multiply, that this Nazarene whom they have condemned and crucified is the Messiah, they and their authority are doomed.

VER. 18. *And they called them*, and sentenced them *not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus.* They were commanded not to mention his name in private conversation, nor speak of his resurrection or doctrines in the presence of public assemblies. The only name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved, these Jesuits of that day would forever suppress. They would stifle its utterance by human lips. But, thank God! man's decrees cannot bind the living truth. Dungeons cannot hold Christianity.

VER. 19. *Peter and John answered.* — Spending the previous night in prison did not awaken the fears of these men, nor abate one iota their faith and confidence in their Master. They did not need to consult together as to what they would say or do in their present position. Without the least hesitation, and still in a respectful manner, they submit to the rulers a new question for their decision. *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.* They have already decided the matter at the tribunal of their own consciences; and they appeal to the sense of right in those before them, who are the official guardians of the honor due to the God of Israel.

VER. 20. *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* — We cannot go counter to our convictions of duty, and the evidences of our senses. We believe in the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, in his resurrection and ascension, in the power of his adorable name, in the salvation he has provided for a perishing world; and they might add, as in the case of St. Paul, "A necessity is laid upon us; yea, woe is unto us, if we preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 16).

VER. 21. *When they had further threatened them.* — As is usual with tyrants and persecutors, who have no arguments, and act without reason or justice, they resort to threatenings. They would gladly punish them with severity, but the convictions of the people stood in their way. The providence of God, whom the people glorified, was also in their way. Therefore *they let them go.*

LESSON VIII. — MAY 21.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. — ACTS iv. 23–37.

23. ¶ And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25. Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30. By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31. ¶ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32. And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35. And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,

37. Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

VER. 23. *They went to their own company.* — Peter and John, having been dismissed from the council-chamber of the Sanhedrim, went to their own Christian friends, who would naturally be interested in hearing of what they had passed through. They proceeded to a company of believers, such as daily met for prayer, or to a Christian assembly that may have included their fellow-apostles, *and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.*

VER. 24. *And, when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God.* — The report made to the assembly convinced the members that there were troublesome times before them. The imprisonment of the apostles, the threats that had been made, the command of silence that had been imposed by the highest ecclesiastical court in the land, revealed a deep-seated hostility to Christian truth. War had been declared upon the disciples of Jesus; and they must abandon their work, or accept the conflict. They naturally recur to the Second Psalm, in which this condition of the church is prophetically set forth. It is supposed that the congregation sang this Psalm, followed by prayer; and that Peter applied the words of the Psalm to the present conjuncture.

Lord, thou art God, which made heaven and earth. — This is the first Christian Church prayer with which we are acquainted. It comes

from hearts deeply moved by a sense of danger, and is a cry to God for protection from enemies. "This beautiful flower grew under the cross." The ground of confidence that the prayer will be heard and answered is the almighty power of God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

VER. 25. *Who by the mouth of David.* — We have here the plenary inspiration of this Second Psalm asserted in the strongest terms; that God spake by the mouth of his servant David. All the ancient Jewish rabbis admit that this Psalm refers to the Messiah, a portion of which is quoted, and fulfilled in the recent hostility of the rulers to the Son of God.

Why did the heathen rage? —The reference is to the Gentiles, or heathen (Roman) governors, who united with the Jewish rulers against the Messiah. The raging is like the wild snorting and tearing of furious horses. *And the people imagine vain things;* i. e., entertain useless and abortive designs to destroy Christ, and accomplish their purposes against the will of God.

VER. 26. *The kings of the earth stood up.* — They rose up, and stood side by side for mutual support; *and the rulers were gathered together*, consulted together, *against the Lord* (Jehovah), *and against his Christ* (his Messiah, or his Anointed). The terms Christ and Messiah both mean "anointed;" and, in designating Christ as the anointed, it is understood that he is anointed by the Father, or appointed by him to the Messianic office. Hence the enemies of Christ are the enemies of God.

VER. 27. *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus.* — Most truly is this prophecy fulfilled in the combination formed against the holy and anointed One, by Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee; Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, whose consent was necessary to the execution of Christ; the Gentiles, represented by the Roman soldiers; and the people of Israel, who demanded and witnessed the crucifixion.

VER. 28. *To do whatsoever thy . . . counsel determined.* — However the heathen may rage, and "the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed," yet God says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. xlvi. 10). The divine sovereignty is a rock, against which the waves of human passions dash in vain.

VER. 29. *Now, Lord, behold their threatenings.* — They pray that their enemies may be restrained, for they have this assurance (Ps. ii. 4): "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." They do not pray for their destruction, that the path may be clear and unobstructed before them, but that they may have boldness to deliver the gospel message in the face of all opposition.

VER. 30. *By stretching forth thy hand to heal.* — They also ask for power to perform signs and miracles of healing in the name of Jesus, as evidences that the omnipotent God is with them, and that the word they preach is the word of God.

VER. 31. *And when they had prayed.* — We come now to the results of the prayer. It is heard in heaven. The arm of the Almighty is outstretched for the protection of the young and comparatively small church, that is feeling the blasts of persecution, and would prepare for the coming tempests.

The place was shaken where they were assembled. — This was a miraculous manifestation that their prayer was heard. It may be regarded as a symbol of the commotions that were at hand, and which the preaching of the gospel would produce. Or it may be accepted as a sign that the omnipotent God is with them, and that he can shake the nations that rise up against him. *They were also filled with the Holy Ghost.* — They had once before received this baptism; and now, in answer to their fervent prayers, there comes from heaven another mighty outpouring of the Spirit. The soul needs to be constantly strengthened and refreshed with power from on high. Under this new gift *they spake the word of God with boldness.* Why should they not? What has any man to fear, who is conscious that the eternal God is with him?

VER. 32. *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart.* — The characteristics of the church are here given. The new converts were bound together in the bonds of Christian affection; and they gave freely of their possessions to all who were in need. *They had all things common;* not making a common stock or fund of all their property, but regarding their possessions as so completely under the law of Christian love, that all who needed aid might share with them. "This," says Townsend, "is a picture of what every Christian church ought to be, and what every Christian church will probably be, when the fulness of the Spirit shall be poured out in the last days, and the consummation of all things arrives. Here we meet with no factions or divisions on the part of the people, no jealousy, no party spirit. No desire of distinction disturbed the harmony of the primitive church. The apostles as the spiritual fathers of God's household, without opposition, superintended all things, and directed the disposal of the extensive and benevolent contributions of the faithful. The first law of their divine Master was fulfilled: mutual and holy love was the sacred bond of their union, the ruling principle of their life and actions."

VER. 33. *With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection.* — The resurrection of Christ was their great theme; and they were endowed with special power to present it to others, and secure its acceptance to their faith. They had special gifts to explain, vindicate, and enforce the great facts in Christ's history, of which they had been witnesses. A large measure of heavenly grace also rested upon all the members of the Church, developing every Christian virtue, — love, liberality, and a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of all over whom they could gain an influence.

VERS. 34, 35. *Neither was there any among them that lacked.* — The poor had an abundance, and the rich enjoyed the luxury of giving to others. Those who *were the possessors of lands or houses sold them.* This was done voluntarily, and, as far as necessary, to meet the wants of the needy. The money thus obtained was *laid at the apostles' feet*, or committed to their care for distribution.

VERS. 36, 37. *And Joses . . . a Levite, having land, sold it.* — This was a special case of a foreigner, and one belonging to the family of Levi, who, having land, sold it, and laid the money at the apostles' feet. He is the well-known Barnabas, who became a faithful preacher of the gospel, and was associated with St. Paul (Acts xiii. 2).

Though the tribe of Levites had no inheritance in Israel, yet they had cities and lands assigned to them (Deut. xxxv. 1–5). As individuals, however, they could acquire and sell landed property in and around their forty-eight cities (Num. xxxv. 1–8; Lev. xxv. 32). The conversion of Joses was followed by many priests who believed (Acts vi.).

LESSON IX. — May 28.

Lying unto God. — Acts v. 1–11.

1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,
2. And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.
3. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?
4. While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.
5. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.
6. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.
7. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
8. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.
9. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.
10. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.
11. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Ver. 1. *A certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife.* — We have here a case in striking contrast with that of Joses and many others, who gave cheerfully the whole amount of the money derived from the sale of property. These persons desired to obtain the reputation for such liberality, without making the necessary sacrifice. This was the first defection in the new church, the first marked development of "the form of godliness, without its power;" and the sin was of such a nature as to require the severest punishment. Ananias was a common name among the Jews, and means "*the grace of the Lord.*" Sapphira means "*beautiful.*" It is sadly evident that their characters did not correspond with their names.

Sold a possession. — They combined together, and sold, we should infer, a farm, or some landed property, as in the case of Barnabas. We are not told that he sold all his real estate. The reference of Luke is to the parcel of land, the amount received for which, is the point in question.

Ver. 2. *And kept back part of the price.* — Professing to give the whole to the Lord, they kept back a part for their own private use. They *brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.* — It matters not how large a part they brought, or how much they retained for themselves. They professed to give the whole, when they did not. The act was performed at the time of public worship, and in the presence of the congregation. The money was given to the apostles, who acted in the name and authority of their divine Master. All the circumstances of the case aggravated their sin, and increased their guilt.

Ver. 3. *Why hath Satan filled thine heart?* — In this inquiry there is a distinct recognition of Satan as a personal agent, in direct hostility

to the Holy Ghost. He rules in the kingdom of darkness, that is opposed to the kingdom of light. His influence may be effectually resisted, for James says (iv. 7), "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you." But, yielded to, he fills the heart, and hardens the conscience, and is thus said to instigate, or impel, to evil deeds. The crime of Judas is traced to Satan, who is said to have entered into him (see Luke xxii. 3, and John xiii. 27). He enters into only a willing mind; and therefore his presence, or agency, is no excuse for the sin. Under the controlling power he had gained over Ananias and Sapphira, they are led *to lie to the Holy Ghost.* They attempted to deceive the Holy Ghost, as well as the church, by pretending to a degree of liberality that they did not possess. Professing to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and acting under his divine direction, they were filled with Satan, and following his dictation. They were hypocrites in the presence of God; and their course, by obliterating the distinction between the works of the flesh and those of the Spirit, tended to corrupt and destroy the church.

VER. 4. *While it remained, was it not thine own?* — It is clear from this, that the offering of property for the benefit of the poor was perfectly voluntary; and, while the property remained unappropriated to charitable purposes, it belonged to them, and might be innocently retained. But, given up by a special consecration, it was "holy to the Lord," and it became sacrilege to appropriate any part of it to one's self (see Lev. xxvii. 28). *And, after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?* — Were not the proceeds of the property at your own disposal, to give the whole, or a part, as you pleased? The apostle mentions this to show the greatness of the crime. Ananias was not required, by any express command of God, to sell his property, or to give the entire proceeds to the church after it was sold. He was required to be an honest, straightforward, Christian man, doing what he pretended to do; and, if he was not this, he was a hypocrite. Quesnel says, "God desires not our property, but our hearts." *Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?* — Here he charges the guilt directly upon himself. Why hast thou deliberated and determined upon this plan, yielding to the devices of Satan, and co-operating with him to do this thing? *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* — Clearly, then, the Holy Ghost is God. (See also Matt. xxviii. 19; Luke ii. 26; 2 Cor. xiii. 14).

VER. 5. *And Ananias fell down.* — His immediate fall and death was the direct act of the Almighty. The severity of the punishment was a rebuke to hypocrisy, a vindication of the honor of the holy and blessed Spirit, and a protection of the church against unrighteous ambition and false professors. Very naturally, *great fear came on all them that heard these things.* They feared the judgment of God, and the power that accompanied his apostles. The sudden retribution that befell these offenders, was calculated to produce a salutary effect in favor of the purity of the Church throughout all time.

VER. 6. *The young men arose, wound him up,* &c. — Some writers suppose that these young men were regularly appointed church officers, to whom such a duty as this belonged. But the only officers of whom we have positive knowledge in the church, at this time, were the apostles. It was quite natural that the younger men present in the congregation should be called upon for such a service, or

volunteer their aid. They *wound him up* probably in a loose shroud, such as was thrown around a corpse. Some think that they wound him up in their own mantles, which they took off for the purpose; others, that they hastily wrapped him in his own loose robe. They *carried him out* of the house or the city. It was usual to bury the dead outside the walls of the city, and as soon as possible, owing to the rapid corruption of the body in that warm climate. Coffins are not used in the East, the body being wrapped in a winding-sheet, with spices around it, and then laid away in a tomb.

VER. 7. *It was about the space of three hours after.* — This may have been at the next regular Jewish hour for prayer; or the meeting may have continued during this whole period, and Sapphira did not attend until about three hours had elapsed after her husband's death. As the corpse had not been carried to the house, but was buried at once, she had no knowledge of what had transpired.

VER. 8. *Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?* — Before coming to the meeting, professedly to worship God, the woman had a longer time for reflection than her husband had; and this question of Peter gave her the opportunity for examining her heart, and telling the truth. But she declared that this was the exact sum, thus deliberately intending to deceive.

VER. 9. *How is it that ye have agreed together*, &c. — What weakness, or wickedness, has taken such possession of you, as to lead you to conspire together *to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?* "That is, to put to the test the Spirit of God, by lying to the Holy Ghost, and attempting to palm off hypocrisy for piety; as though he could not detect the difference, or as though he were alike the author of both." — *Jacobus.* The sentence of swift judgment is pronounced against her for her awful crime, which began with a gross violation of the duties of married life, and ended in insulting the Holy Spirit.

VER. 10. *Then fell she down straightway at his feet.* — The sudden death of these transgressors was not the result of a threat or a prayer from Peter. It was not, as some have intimated, the effect of a sudden shock given to their sensibilities, by the detection of their sin, before the whole congregation, where they expected praise for their liberality. The circumstances, in both cases, show that it was a judicial infliction by the direct visitation of God.

VER. 11. *And great fear came upon all the church.* — The Church was established for spiritual purposes; and its success obviously depends upon its purity. It is the Church of the living God, ever under his omniscient eye, and governed by the laws of righteousness and holiness. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira invaded the Church at several points. "1. It was a theft (ver. 3), proceeding from the love of money, the root of all evil. 2. It was a lie, and a hypocritical act; an abomination in the eyes of the God of truth (vers. 3, 8). 3. It was committed intentionally and wantonly: 'was it not in thine own power?' (ver. 4). 4. It was committed in accordance with a secret understanding of the two persons who combined to do evil, in place of addressing to each other's conscience the words, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' (Gen. xxxix. 9). 5. It grieved the Holy Spirit of God, who warned, rebuked, and admonished them, not only by the mouth of Peter, but also in their own hearts, as believing members of the Church (vers. 3, 4, 9). 6. It was an

offence to the Church, that should not have spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. v. 27), and which just began to exhibit such beauty and vigor in the Holy Ghost (xxiv. 32). 7. It had a tendency to have the name of Jesus Christ blasphemed among the Gentiles." — *Lange's Commentary.*

LESSON X. — JUNE 4.

THE APOSTLES IN PRISON. — ACTS v. 12–26.

12. ¶ And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women);

15. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16. There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

17. ¶ Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with indignation,

18. And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20. Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21. And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23. Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors; but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24. Now when the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests, heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people,

26. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

VER. 12. *By the hands of the apostles*, &c. — God taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that all turn to him and live. In wrath he remembers mercy (Hab. iii. 2); and, having visited the ungodly with his judgments, he now turns to meet the wants of the needy, and add fresh testimony to the truth and power of the glorious gospel. There were many miracles of healing, that excited the wonder of the people, and drew many into the fold of Christ.

They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. — The number of the disciples of Christ had so increased that the upper room (Acts i. 13) was too small for them; and they now met, as a distinct body of worshippers, in Solomon's porch, which was sufficiently spacious and well fitted to accommodate them all. The spirit of harmony reigned over their assemblies, and united their hearts.

VERS. 13, 14. *And of the rest durst no man join himself to them.* — Such was the reverence entertained for the apostles, and the awe awakened by the severe and speedy punishment inflicted upon Ananias and Sapphira for their hypocrisy, that the promiscuous multitude were kept back from their assemblies, and from making a false profession of faith. No man dare join them unless he was sincere. But among the common people there were many who regarded the company of believers with esteem and admiration; and the church

steadily increased by accessions from this class. They were *added to the Lord* by a living faith, and were united to him as the branches are united to the vine.

VER. 15. *They brought forth the sick into the streets.* — The term "streets" here includes the public squares and open places of resort, such as are found around the gates in Oriental cities. The rich were brought in beds, and the poor on couches or pallets, *that at least the shadow of Peter* might fall on them as he was passing to and from the temple. It does not appear that any were really healed by his shadow, although some persons may have been restored without touching him; but the expression shows the great confidence of the people in his healing power. They may have been healed by their faith in the divine energy that inspired him; as the woman was who said of our Lord, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole" (Matt. ix. 20, 21). It is stated (Acts xix. 11, 12) of the Apostle Paul, that God wrought miracles through handkerchiefs and aprons that had been in contact with his body; and it was as easy for divine power to heal the sick by means of Peter's shadow, as in any other way.

VER. 16. *There came also a multitude out of the cities.* — Reports of the numerous instances of healing are circulated far and wide; and multitudes flock to Jerusalem from the neighboring cities, with their sick and with demoniacs, and they are all healed. The promise was fulfilled, "According to your faith be it unto you."

VER. 17. *Then the high priest rose up.* — Again the high priest Annas (Acts iv. 6) was aroused to take active measures to suppress the new sect, aided by the Sadducees who belonged to the high priest's party in opposition to our Lord. This movement is marked by increased bitterness of feeling, and more resolute action than when only Peter and John were imprisoned for a night (Acts iv. 1–3). They were *filled with indignation.* The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, but these men were filled with wicked zeal. The Sadducees could not bear to see the doctrine of the resurrection gaining ground, and thus threatening to sweep away their own tenets; and the high priest feared for the national religion, which he officially represented.

VER. 18. *Laid hands on the apostles.* — This time they imprisoned all the apostles. They wish to make thorough work; and they adopt the most effectual measures within their power to silence all Christ's apostles, and shut out their influence from the people. They put chains upon the believers and their faith, and hope thereby to hold them, and stop the signs and wonders that are thinning their ranks, and swelling the assemblies of the Christians.

VER. 19. *But the angel of the Lord by night.* — They had not reckoned on this. They thought that their power was supreme, and that all that was necessary for their protection was to exercise it. They trusted to the prison-keepers to see that the doors were securely closed. But, by the Power above them, an angel is sent by night to open the prison-doors, and bring forth the apostles. "The rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed. But he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. ii. 2, 4).

VER. 20. *Go stand and speak in the temple.* — The angel directs them to go and stand in the sacred enclosure of the temple, and speak in the presence of the people *all the words of this life;* that is, all the

doctrines of Christ, who is our life, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John xiv. 6); who is the resurrection and the life (John xi. 25); who has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (1 Tim. i. 10).

VER. 21. *And when they heard that.* — They obeyed without the least hesitation, or fear of the consequences. They appear at early dawn at the temple, the time when our Lord taught the people who flocked to hear him (see Luke xxi. 38; John viii. 2). The morning hours are delightful for worship and prayer.

VERS. 21–23. *But the high priest came,* &c. — While the apostles were preaching "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," the high priest and his followers called a meeting of the whole council, or Sanhedrim, to institute legal measures against them. The members are promptly in their seats; and doubtless a glow of satisfaction passes over the august assembly as they send the officers to the prison, to bring the apostles before them. In due time the officers return, and make their report. Their own words tell the whole: "The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors; but, when we had opened, we found no man within." If there was any satisfaction in knowing that the prison was found shut with all safety, and that the keepers were standing faithful at their posts, guarding the doors, the Sanhedrim had these facts to comfort them.

VER. 24. *Now when the high priest and captain . . . heard these things.* — The captain of the temple-guard, who was probably a priest, would naturally be engaged in effecting the arrest of the apostles (comp. Acts iv. 1). The chief priests were "the heads of the twenty-four courses appointed by David (1 Chron. xxiv.); or, possibly, also those who had been high priests under the Roman appointment, just as Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, instead of one as provided by the Jewish law (Acts iv. 6)." When they heard these things, *they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.* They were perplexed, and were utterly at a loss to conceive what would be the consequences if things went on in this amazing manner. How much better for them to have yielded to the evidences directly before their eyes, and acknowledged the truth as it is in Jesus!

VER. 25. *Then came one, and told them.* — In the midst of their perplexity, they are told at least that the prisoners are found. The simple fact is stated, that they *are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.*

VER. 26. *Then went the captain with the officers.* — The commander of the Levitical guard, accompanied by the servants of the high court, went and brought the apostles *without violence.* It was unnecessary to use violence with the apostles themselves; for their religion taught them not to resist authority, but to submit for conscience' sake, recognizing, however, the higher claims of God's law when human laws conflicted with the divine. But the reason stated for not using violence is, that they feared the people might stone them. They did not fear this from the disciples, but from the popular feeling that prevailed among the multitude who had received the benefits of healing, and who knew that the apostles had been released from prison by the direct interposition of God. This latter circumstance must have greatly strengthened and encouraged the apostles in their work, and

given them great power in addressing the people. Nor can we suppose that they were much disturbed by the order to accompany the captain to the council; for it gave them another opportunity to preach the gospel to the rulers of the nation, and the leaders of the persecution against them.

LESSON XI. — JUNE 11.

THE APOSTLES BEFORE THE COUNCIL. — ACTS v. 27–42.

27. And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28. Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29. ¶ Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32. And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33. ¶ When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.

34. Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35. And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41. ¶ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

VER. 27. *When they had brought them.* — The apostles, having made no resistance, were quietly brought by the officers, and placed in the centre of the room, before the members of the council.

VER. 28. *Did we not straitly command you?* — Did we not strictly command you, *that ye should not teach in this name?* The high priest avoids mentioning the name of Jesus, as if it were beneath his dignity to pronounce it. He then charges them with having filled Jerusalem with their doctrine, which was in reality a public admission of their great diligence and success. Under the secret trouble of conscience, and the dread of merited punishment, he refers to their intention *to bring this man's blood upon* them. The Jews had profanely said, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25); and now that this name, that is above every name, is rapidly gaining in influence, and these apostles are doing every thing to add to its power, they naturally dread the result to themselves. They fear that the dreadful imprecation may be fulfilled.

VER. 29. *Peter . . . said, We ought to obey God rather than men.* — He commences his address with laying down a principle, that he had before expressed (Acts iv. 19), and now with emphasis re-affirms.

They would obey the Jewish authorities as far as their consciences would allow, and would submit to punishment and imprisonment; but, in all things that God commanded, they must and would obey, however his law might conflict with human law. And such is the principle that should govern every loyal subject of God's government.

VER. 30. *The God of our fathers.* — Peter now places in striking contrast their treatment of Christ with that of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of whom they boast. The being whom *they slew and hanged on a tree*, whom they treated most ignominiously, this God has glorified by raising him from the dead.

VER. 31. *Him hath God exalted* — with, or rather to, his right hand (Ps. cx. 1) — *to be a Prince and a Saviour.* — In Acts iii. 15, he is called "the Prince of life." He is our leader and king, and, as such, claims our obedience. He is also a Saviour to give repentance to Israel. Here repentance and forgiveness are presented as gifts of divine grace. He is the author of our salvation, as he "is the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. xii. 2). In the work of redemption, Christ is "all and in all." This by no means interferes with man's free will, but, rightly viewed, furnishes the greatest encouragement to the exercise of repentance and faith.

VER. 32. *We are his witnesses.* — The apostles were chosen by God to be witnesses of the facts in Christ's history, and the great truths of his religion. Nor were they alone in this; for the Holy Ghost also bare witness through the miracles that were performed, through the signs and wonders that accompanied their work. *Whom God hath given to them that obey him.* — Those who obeyed God, by believing in his Son Jesus Christ, were sealed by the Holy Spirit; and those who are guided by the Spirit must obey God in all things.

VER. 33. *They were cut to the heart.* — Literally, they *were sawn through:* Tyndale says, *They clave asunder.* Instead of being filled with grief and repentance in view of their great sins, they were torn asunder with rage, by the bol . charges made to their faces, by the apostles; and at once *took counsel to slay them.* This was a long step forward in the march of persecution.

VER. 34. *There stood up a Pharisee named Gamaliel.* — Four facts are stated in regard to this man. First, he was a member of the Sanhedrim. Second, he was a Pharisee. Third, he was a doctor, or teacher of the law. Fourth, he was a man of wide reputation, and highly esteemed in the community. As a Pharisee, he believed in the doctrine of the resurrection, and hence did not sympathize with the Sadducees in their hostility to the apostles on this ground, whatever may have been his feelings on other grounds. Several distinguished persons of his name are mentioned in the Jewish records; but he was probably the same Gamaliel who was the teacher of Saul of Tarsus (Acts xxii. 3).

Commanded to put the apostles forth a little space, — that is, allow them to retire for a short time, while the council deliberated on the case.

VER. 35. *Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves.* — Act with prudence in this matter, and do not hastily decide upon measures that you will afterwards regret. Weigh well what you *intend to do* with these men, whom some of you propose to put to death. This was good advice; and to him our Lord might have said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34).

VER. 36. *There rose up Theudas.* — There were several Jews of this name, who were leaders of insurrections in those troublesome times; one mentioned by Josephus, who, some years later, raised a rebellion, and was destroyed with all his forces. The case mentioned by Gamaliel was a familiar one to the members of the council, and served as an apt illustration of the point before him. This Theudas pretended to be a great prophet, or leader, and gathered about four hundred followers; but the revolt was entirely quelled, and the whole movement came *to nought.*

VER. 37. *After this man rose up Judas of Galilee.*—This case is several times referred to by Josephus (Antiq. xvii. 10, 5; xviii. 1; xx. 5, 2,), who twice calls Judas a Galilæan, and once a Gaulonite, because he was born in Gamala, in Lower Gaulonitis. He led an insurrection *in the days of the taxing;* that is, about the twelfth year of Christ, when Judæa, as a Roman province, was attached to Syria, and Quirinus, or Cyrenius, then president of Syria, caused an enrolment of the property of the several provinces, preparatory to taxation. This the proud Jews resisted, and Judas led the opposition. He, however, perished; and his followers were dispersed.

VERS. 38, 39. *And now I say unto you.* — Now he makes a practical application of the general principle introduced by these illustrations, that all events are controlled by divine Providence, and whatever is of man's devices *will come to nought*, while what is of God cannot be overthrown. Therefore he says to the council, *Refrain from these men.* Let them alone. Leave them in the hands of God. If they are doing his will, we cannot stop them. If they are misguided fanatics, they will work out their own destruction; and God will take care of the institutions and national interests that we represent. On the other hand, if we are in error, and oppose them, we may find ourselves in the position of fighting against God. And they, as Jews, needed no arguments to show how utterly vain it is to resist Omnipotence.

VER. 40. *To him they agreed*, so far as not to slay the apostles. His influence, his just reasoning, and the least sense of prudence, would dictate this. But they called the apostles in, and beat them. This was done to show that they had not without cause instituted proceedings against them, and to punish them for disobeying their commands. Besides, if they are not allowed to kill them, they wish at least to give vent to their spite by scourging them. The scourging was usually done by "a whip with two lashes knotted with bones, or heavy indented circles of bronze; or terminated by hooks, in which case it was aptly denominated *a scorpion.*"

VER. 41. *They departed . . . rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* — Of all who were engaged in these proceedings, the happiest men were those who had been scourged. They departed with their hearts overflowing with joy. True, they had been insulted, and most unjustly treated, and doubtless were in pain from the scourging they had received; but they felt in their souls the high honors conferred upon them, that *they are counted worthy to suffer shame* for the precious name of Jesus. The thought exalts their whole being, and fills them with sweet delight. It is a great thing to labor successfully for Christ, but it is a higher privilege to suffer for him. Study Phil. i. 29; Matt. v. 11, 12; Luke vi. 22, 23;

1 Pet. ii. 19, 20, — passages that glow with a truth radiant with celestial light.

VER. 42. *And daily they ceased not to teach.* — At the appointed hours for prayer in the temple, when large numbers were present for devotion, they continued to teach and preach the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and urge all to repentance and the exercise of faith. They also went from house to house, holding social meetings in different parts of the city, and reaching as many persons as possible, with the influences of divine truth. Everywhere their great theme was "JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED."

LESSON XII. — JUNE 18.

THE SEVEN CHOSEN. — ACTS vi. 1–15.

1. And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.
2. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.
3. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.
4. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.
5. ¶ And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:
6. Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.
7. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.
8. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.
9. ¶ Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.
10. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.
11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.
12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,
13. And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:
14. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.
15. And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

VER. 1. *And in those days.* — Some time after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, and when the disciples had greatly multiplied, the interests and claims of different classes produced the first dissension in the Church. This was more alarming than the threats of enemies outside, because it might disturb the unity, and mar the purity, which had characterized the body in the past. But it led, under a merciful Providence, to the institution of a new office, that of deacons, and to the development of a Christian worker whose zeal, boldness, and heroic faith in the hour of a cruel death, forms one of the most impressive and illustrious chapters in the early history of the Church.

There arose a murmuring of the Grecians, — or, rather, Hellenists. These were Jews who were born and resided in Grecian cities, and spoke the Grecian language. This was a very numerous class, and formed a majority of the converts on the day of Pentecost. Many had doubtless taken up their residence at Jerusalem, rather than return to their native cities.

The Hebrews were the native-born Jews, who spoke the Hebrew, i.e., the Aramæan (Syro-Chaldaic) language, and regarded the Hellenists as an inferior class. These, having the care of the common fund

provided for the poor by the liberality of the rich converts, failed, as it would seem, to give to the widows of the Hellenists their due proportion of relief, while the native Jews were liberally supplied. The neglect may have been intentional, growing out of early animosities that grace had not entirely purged from the heart, or it may have arisen from the large number to be supplied *in the daily ministrations* of food and money.

VER. 2. *Then the twelve called the multitude.* — They assembled, not, probably, the entire membership of the Church, but those who were at Jerusalem; and thus all had the opportunity of sharing in the rule of the Church, while the divinely appointed officers gave general directions.

It is not reason, &c. — It is not satisfactory or suitable, that we should leave the higher and more important work of teaching the word of God, to distribute the daily supplies for the tables. It was their special calling to provide spiritual food for the soul, while others could well attend to the wants of the poor; and thus a division of labor would be for the benefit of all classes.

VER. 3. *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out*, &c. — They are called upon to select seven men, not only with a reputation for strict honesty, but *full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom*, men of ardent piety and sound practical judgment. They must be men capable of administering the temporal affairs of the Church with discretion, and also, while distributing to the physical necessities of the poor, capable of adding words of spiritual comfort or advice, as the recipients of their bounty may require.

VER. 4. *We will give ourselves continually to prayer.* — Prayer, and the preaching of God's word, are the two great duties of the gospel minister. Prayer fills his soul with light and truth from above; and by preaching he communicates to others the treasures he has received.

VER. 5. *The saying pleased the whole multitude.* — The plan was unanimously adopted; and thus another office was added to the apostolic, which contributed to the organic structure of the church. Stephen was the first chosen, *a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost.* He and all his associates, many suppose, were Hellenists, or foreign Jews, and were selected to satisfy the complaints that had been made. This is inferred from their Greek names, though it is quite probable that some of the seven were Hebrews. To the remarkable history of Stephen, the first elected deacon of the Church of Christ, the second part of this chapter, and the whole of the next, are devoted. Philip was a successful evangelist, as well as a deacon, and, after the death of Stephen, preached the gospel in Samaria. (See Acts viii. 5, 6.) He taught an officer of the court of Candace the way of salvation (Acts viii. 26–31), and is spoken of as an evangelist in Acts xxi. 8. Of the history of the other five, nothing is known. Nicolas is spoken of as a proselyte of Antioch; that is, he was a Gentile Greek who became converted to the Jewish faith, and afterwards embraced the gospel. Antioch was a city of Syria, and the birthplace of the Gentile Christian Church (Acts xi. 19–22). Here the disciples were first called Christians (Acts xi. 26).

VER. 6. *Whom they set before the apostles.* — The seven who had been chosen to serve as deacons of the church were now presented to the apostles, who solemnly set them apart to this office with prayer

and the imposition of hands. The laying-on of hands, when one was inducted into office, was a very ancient Jewish custom. (See Gen. xlviii. 14; Num. xxvii. 18, 19). It was adopted by the apostles as the outward form of conveying the blessings of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples (Acts viii. 17, xix. 6). In this case it was not only the sign of the gift of the Spirit, but also that the deacons, though elected by the Church, derived their commission and authority from Christ, through the apostles.

VER. 7. *And the word of God increased.* — The danger of a rupture in the Church having been happily averted, and the spirit of union having been restored, the work of God rapidly advanced. The faithful labors of the newly appointed deacons doubtless contributed to this; while the apostles, relieved of the special care of the poor, were able to give themselves more fully to the spiritual interests of the Church. One remarkable result of the influences of divine grace was the conversion of *a great company of the priests.* They had been among the most violent opposers and persecutors of Christ and his apostles; but God could "purify the sons of Levi," and purge them "that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. iii. 3).

VER. 8. *And Stephen, full of faith and power.* — Faith always confers power. Any Christian who is full of faith, whether a minister, deacon, or private member, is full of power to work successfully for the Lord. We do not wonder that Stephen, thus filled, *did great wonders and miracles among the people.* As the duties of his office took him among the poor and the sick, he had opportunities for working miracles, and thus was enabled, in the most effectual manner, to relieve those in distress. He was also eminently qualified to confer the highest spiritual benefits upon all within his reach. Well has it been said, "Stephen, a star of the first magnitude in the constellation of the seven deacons." "A single servant who is full of grace and the Spirit, accomplishes more in the Church than a hundred servants who are without the Spirit."

VER. 9. *There arose certain of the synagogue.* — The wonders and miracles wrought by Stephen, and the knowledge and eloquence he displayed in bearing witness to Christ, awakened the envy and jealousy of the unbelieving Jews, especially the Hellenistic Jews with whom he had been formerly associated. Becoming excited, they entered into discussions, or debates, with him. Jews from foreign countries, who came to reside or worship at Jerusalem, had their own synagogues, some of which are here named. Those from Cyrene, a large and powerful city in Africa, had "a synagogue of the Cyrenians," with whom, perhaps, the Alexandrians were united, or they may have had a separate synagogue. The Cilicians, and those from Proconsular Asia, also had synagogues, or, as some suppose, united in one. At this time, according to the Rabbinic writers, the synagogues at Jerusalem numbered four hundred and eighty. That of the Alexandrians was prominent, as at that period there were about a hundred thousand Jews residing at Alexandria. The Libertines were "probably Jewish freed men from Rome, who had been taken captive by Pompey, and afterwards manumitted, with the privilege of retaining their religion." These various classes of foreign Jews disputed with Stephen, endeavoring to destroy the force of his arguments in favor of the Messiah.

VER. 10. *They were not able to resist*, &c. — They could not withstand the wisdom, and the (Holy) Spirit, by which he was inspired to speak. His arguments, clothed with wisdom from above, were invincible. The promise was fulfilled to him, "I will give you a mouth, and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, or resist" (Luke xxi. 15).

VER. 11. *They suborned men.* — These Hellenistic Jews, unable to refute the doctrines and arguments of Stephen in favor of the Christian religion, resort to cunning to effect his ruin. They procured false witnesses, and privately instructed them to circulate as widely as possible the charge that they had heard Stephen utter blasphemies against Moses and against God himself. Their object was to influence public opinion to his disadvantage, and furnish the magistrates an opportunity to institute legal proceedings against him.

VER. 12. *They stirred up the people and the elders.* — They raised a popular tumult against Stephen, and also aroused the members of the Sanhedrim; and unexpectedly, perhaps while he was engaged in some errand of mercy, they seized him, and brought him before the council. This was the first occasion on which the common people united with the authorities in hostility to the Christians. Heretofore the priests and elders had found the population of the city in their way: now the tide has turned, and the current of the population is with them, and bears them along in opposition to the Christians.

VERS. 13, 14. *And set up false witnesses*, &c. — Their testimony was false, as regards the meaning they put upon Stephen's words. They maliciously pervert his language; just as in the case of our Lord, where false witnesses perverted his words in regard to the temple (Matt. xxvi. 60, 61). They also exaggerate the case by saying that *he ceaseth not* to speak blasphemous words. The charge is not, as before, "against Moses and God" (ver. 11); but, against *this holy place* (the temple or Jerusalem), and *the law*, the ceremonial law of Moses. Probably Stephen repeated, in the course of his address, Christ's prophecies, recorded in Matt. xxiv.; Luke xxi.; John iv. 21. The *customs of Moses*, that is, the ceremonial rites and institutions of the Jewish faith, were changed by the destruction of the temple (Heb. xii. 27, 28; viii. 13).

VER. 15. *Looking steadfastly on him.* — Attracted by the unusual appearance of his countenance, they looked steadfastly on him, and observed that his face was lighted up as with an angelic radiance, "revealing not only the courage of a man, a divine inspiration, and holy serenity of the soul, but also the brightness of a preternatural light like that of Moses" (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30). It was the light or glory reflected from the face of Jesus Christ.

THIRD QUARTER.

LESSONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LESSON I. — JULY 2.

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON. — 1 CHRON. xxviii. 1–10.

1. And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.

2. Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: *As for me*, I *had* in mine heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

3. But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name, because thou *hast been* a man of war, and hast shed blood.

4. Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever: for he hath chosen Judah *to be* the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make *me* king over all Israel:

5. And of all my sons (for the Lord hath given me many sons), he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel.

6. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him *to be* my son, and I will be his father.

7. Moreover I will establish his kingdom forever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day.

8. Now, therefore, in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave *it* for an inheritance for your children after you forever.

9. ¶ And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever.

10. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do *it*.

Solomon was the youngest son of David and Bathsheba, and from his birth was the object of his father's special affections. He was committed to the care of Nathan the prophet, who called him Jedidiah, i.e., "*loved of Jehovah*" (2 Sam. xii. 25).

In the declining years of David, his eldest surviving son, Adonijah, made a great display with his chariots and horsemen, and endeavored to place himself upon the throne (1 Kings i. 5). He was aided by Joab, the commander of the army, and by Abiathar, one of the chief priests (1 Kings i. 7). The prophet Nathan conferred with Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, and the king's favorite; and they appeared

before David, and persuaded him to appoint Solomon as his successor to the throne (1 Kings i. 11–30).

Thus the plot of Adonijah was defeated, and Solomon was anointed king (1 Kings i. 39). This event took place, as nearly as can be ascertained, 1015 B.C.

VER. 1. *David assembled all the princes of Israel.* — The time was drawing near when David must die. When upon his death-bed, he gave a most solemn and touching charge to his son Solomon, to be strong, show himself to be a man, to walk in the ways and keep the statutes of the Lord (1 Kings ii. 1–11). But this charge following the exhortation to the princes and people was given previously, and in the presence of the leading men of the nation. The names of the princes of the tribes of Israel are given in 1 Chron. xxvii. 16–22. These were the men of the highest rank.

Captains of the companies. — The twelve generals mentioned in chap. xxvii. 1–15.

The stewards and officers. — These included the eunuchs, attendants on the court, and formed a general and mixed company, very different from that mentioned in chap. xxiii. 2.

VER. 2. *Hear me, my brethren.* — David, being a constitutional king, addresses the assembly in a respectful and courteous manner.

I had in mine heart. — David purposed, or designed, to build a house for the ark of God (2 Sam. vii. 2).

For the footstool of our God. — "God seated between the cherubim, at the two extremities of the ark, might be said to be enthroned in his glory, and the coverlet of the ark to be his footstool." — *Jamieson.*

He had made ready for the building. — He had made preparations, and amassed sufficient treasures to build a temple, according to the plan given to Solomon. Thus he proved the sincerity of his pious intentions.

VER. 3. *Thou hast been a man of war.* — The temple of God at Jerusalem, which was to stand as a type of the church of the Prince of peace, it was proper should be erected by a peaceful sovereign. Hence Solomon was selected, whose reign was one of unbroken peace. David had done his work, by subduing the enemies of God's people, and bringing the nation into a condition where a splendid memorial of their religion could be erected for the worship of the one living and true God.

VER. 4. *The Lord . . . chose me . . . to be king,* — i.e., it was not my valor, or merit, or even by the law of primogeniture, that I was made king over Israel. It was purely the sovereign grace of God that selected the tribe, and then the family, and then myself, — the youngest of the sons, — and anointed me to take the throne.

VER. 5. *He hath chosen Solomon.* — This is intimated in chap. xvii. 12, with promises of God's special favor (chap. xvii. 14, 15. See also 2 Sam. vii. 12–16), which brings out also God's sovereign mercy.

VER. 6. *He shall build my house and my courts.* — What high honors are thus conferred upon Solomon! He is chosen to be king over Israel; to build God's temple, the light of which shall fill the earth; and, more than all, to be God's son; and the promise is, "I will be to him a father."

VER. 7. *I will establish his kingdom forever, if he be constant.* — All God's promises to his children are conditional. A throne that is to

stand forever must rest upon the obedience and faithfulness of its occupant. Surely Solomon has every motive to obey the precepts of the Lord his God.

VER. 8. *In the sight of all Israel.* — Those who are present, and all the people whom they represent, are urged to keep the commands of God, that they may enjoy prosperity, and leave the good land as an inheritance for their children.

VERS. 9–10. *And now, Solomon my son.* — The venerable king and father now turns to his son, and, in a most solemn and affectionate manner, presses upon him the necessity of knowing, and serving with a perfect heart and a willing mind, Him who searches our hearts, and understandeth all our thoughts. He warns him against forsaking God. As he is selected to build "an house for the sanctuary," he urges him to be strong, — strong in righteousness, and in devotion to the God of Israel.

LESSON II. — July 9.

Solomon's Choice. — 2 Chron. i. 1–17.

1. And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God *was* with him, and magnified him exceedingly.
2. Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers.
3. So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness.
4. But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to *the place which* David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem.
5. Moreover the brazen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the Lord; and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it.
6. And Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before the Lord, which *was* at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.
7. ¶ In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.
8. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.
9. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.
10. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, *that is so* great?
11. And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:
12. Wisdom and knowledge *is* granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.
13. ¶ Then Solomon came *from his journey* to the high place that *was* at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel.
14. And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.
15. And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem *as plenteous* as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycamore-trees that *are* in the vale for abundance.
16. And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.
17. And they fetched up, and brought forth out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty: and so brought they out *horses* for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means.

David reigned forty years; seven years at Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem (1 Chron. xxix. 27). He died at seventy years of age, "full of days, riches, and honors" (1 Chron. xxix. 28). His history is one of remarkable incidents, noble deeds, providential deliverances, great prosperity, and various crimes. He was a statesman, a warrior, and a poet. He was a lover of the divine law, and rendered important services that contributed to the religious elevation of the kingdom, and to the glory of God. As the sweet Psalmist of Israel, he will ever be honored and held in grateful remembrance by the whole Church.

Some time before David's death, Solomon, at the age of eighteen,

was made king to reign after his father (1 Kings i. 33–35). This was at the time of the conspiracy of Adonijah, and was designed to crush it. Afterwards he was made king a second time, and anointed unto the Lord to be the chief governor (1 Chron. xxix. 22). He was anointed theocratic king in Israel. God was still the supreme ruler of the people, and Solomon was his vicegerent. While the throne was hereditary in the house of David, according to the divine promise, Jehovah held the right of election, and preferred Solomon before all his brethren.

VER. 1. *God was with him, and magnified him greatly.* — God is the source of true power and prosperity to individuals and nations, kings and subjects. The whole history of Israel most strikingly confirms and illustrates this.

VER. 2. *Solomon spake to all Israel.* — The youthful king, influenced by his love and reverence for God, summoned the chief officers of the nation, the captains, judges, and governors, to attend him in a solemn religious procession. This occured in the second year of Solomon's reign.

VERS. 3–5. Gibeon was a Levitical city in the tribe of Benjamin, situated upon an eminence six miles north of Jerusalem. It is selected by Solomon for the performance of his sacred rites, because the tabernacle made by Moses, and all the ancient furniture connected with the national worship, were there. Zadok was the high priest, and, with his brethren the priests, was appointed to offer, morning and evening, burnt offerings unto the Lord, upon the altar (1 Chron. xvi. 39, 40). The ark was in the new tent which David made for it in Jerusalem; but the time-honored altar, made in the wilderness five hundred years before by the skill of Bezaleel (Exod. xxxviii. 1), was before the tabernacle at Gibeon.

VER. 6. *Offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.* — This great offering was made as a national expression of reverence for the God of Israel, penitence for past sins, and was such as became the rank of the offerer.

VERS. 7–11. *In that night did God appear unto Solomon.* — Connecting this account with that given in 1 Kings iii. 5–15, we find that Solomon had retired to rest with his mind in a high state of religious fervor, produced by the services in which he had been engaged. He had doubtless prayed earnestly for wisdom; and, in his sleep, God appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Ask what I shall give thee." Again he asks for wisdom and knowledge, that he may administer the government with discretion, justice, and success. His request is granted. What he prays for in his waking hours, is answered in a night vision.

VER. 12. *And I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor.* — A distinction is made here between general riches, and the wealth that consists in precious stones, treasures, and tribute-money. These, with honor, are given in addition to the wisdom and knowledge asked for and promised. Those who make riches the great aim of life often fail to obtain them; while those who seek and find wisdom discover that "length of days is in her right hand, and, in her left hand, riches and honor" (Prov. iii. 16, viii. 18; 1 Tim. iv. 8).

VER. 14. *Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen.* — "His passion for horses was greater than that of any Israelitish monarch before or

after him. His stud comprised fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses. This was a prohibited indulgence, whether as an instrument of luxury or power. But it was not merely for his own use, that he imported the horses of Egypt. The immense equestrian establishment he erected was not for show merely, but also for profit. The Egyptian breed of horses was highly valued; and being as fine as Arabians, but larger and more powerful, as clearly appears from the monuments, they were well fitted for being yoked in chariots. They were light, but compact and solid vehicles, without springs." — *Jamieson.*

VER. 15. *Made silver and gold . . . as plenteous as stones.* — David had accumulated immense treasures, which Solomon had inherited; but he added largely to them by trade and commerce with other nations. His vessels went to distant shores, and returned laden with gold and costly merchandise. As a monarch, he possessed advantages for trade greatly superior to any of his subjects. Like the multiplication of horses, however, the accumulation of silver and gold was prohibited to a theocratic king (see Deut. xvii. 16, 17).

VER. 16. *Linen yarn, at a price.* — These words sound strangely in the midst of a description of horses and chariots imported from Egypt. Gesenius, followed by Keil, gives this meaning to the passage: "And a company, or caravan, of the king's merchants (traders), brought a troop, or string, of horses, from Egypt, at a price." The original Hebrew word signifies "a collection," "a gathering," and is nowhere used to denote *linen yarn.*

VER. 17. *A chariot for six hundred shekels of silver.* — A shekel was a weight, and, before the exile, was used as uncoined money. Contributions to the temple were paid in silver shekels (Exod. xxx. 13), also the fines for offences (Exod. xxi. 22; Deut. xxii. 19, 29; Lev. v. 15), taxes exacted by kings or governors (2 Kings xv. 20; Neh. v. 15), purchasable articles (2 Sam. xxiv. 24; 2 Kings vii. 1), &c. In all cases, probably, the term "pieces" of silver means shekels. The first coin which bore the name of shekel appeared after the exile, in the time of the Maccabees, and bore the inscription, "Shekel of Israel."

In the time of Solomon, there seems to have been a difference between the sacred shekel (Exod. xxx. 13) and the shekel after the king's weight (2 Sam. xiv. 26), which cannot be accurately determined. Estimating, however, the shekel at 2*s.* 3*d.* or 2*s.* 6*d.*, a chariot that brought six hundred shekels would be worth £68 9*s.* or £75; while a horse at one hundred and fifty shekels would cost £17 2*s.* or £18 15*s.*. A single chariot with two horses would be worth £112 sterling.

For all the kings of the Hittites and . . . of Syria. — After the Hittites were expelled from Palestine, a portion of the tribe settled north of Lebanon, and acquired large possessions contiguous to the Syrians. With them, as well as the Syrians, who could import the Egyptian horses only through Judæa, a very lucrative trade was established. The agents purchased them in the markets of Egypt, and brought them to the "chariot cities." Here depots and stables were erected on the frontiers of the kingdom; such as, Beth-marcaboth, "the house of chariots," and Hazor-suzah, "the village of horses" (Josh. xix. 5; 1 Kings x. 26).

LESSON III. — JULY 16.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE. — 2 CHRON. iii. 1–17.

1. Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in Mount Moriah, where *the Lord* appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

2. And he began to build in the second *day* of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign.

3. ¶ Now these *are the things wherein* Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure *was* three-score cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits.

4. And the porch that *was* in the front *of the house*, the length *of it was* according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height *was* a hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold.

5. And the greater house he ceiled with fir-tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm-trees and chains.

6. And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold *was* gold of Parvaim.

7. He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubims on the walls.

8. And he made the most holy house, the length whereof *was* according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, *amounting* to six hundred talents.

9. And the weight of the nails *was* fifty shekels of gold. And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

10. And in the most holy house he made two cherubims of image work, and overlaid them with gold.

11. ¶ And the wings of the cherubims *were* twenty cubits long: one wing *of the one cherub was* five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing *was likewise* five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub.

12. And *one* wing of the other cherub *was* five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house; and the other wing *was* five cubits *also*, joining to the wing of the other cherub.

13. The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits; and they stood on their feet, and their faces *were* inward.

14. ¶ And he made the veil *of* blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon.

15. Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits high, and the chapiter that *was* on the top of each of them *was* five cubits.

16. And he made chains, *as* in the oracle, and put *them* on the heads of the pillars; and made a hundred pomegranates, and put *them* on the chains.

17. And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz.

The beginning of Solomon's reign was rendered illustrious by his extensive preparations to build a temple for the worship of God. The erection of a palace for himself is here and elsewhere only incidentally noticed (2 Chron. ii. 1, 2). He shows his wisdom by making the honor of God, and the religious development of the nation, the chief objects of attention.

A correspondence is opened with Huram, the king of Tyre, for aid based upon two reasons: 1. "The temple he proposed to build must be a solid and permanent building, because the worship was to be continued in perpetuity; and therefore the materials were required to be of the most durable quality. 2. It must be a magnificent structure, because it was to be dedicated to the God who was greater than all gods; and therefore, as it might seem a presumptuous idea to erect an edifice for a Being whom the heaven and the heaven of heavens do not contain, it was explained that Solomon's object was not to

build a house for him to dwell in, but a temple in which his worshippers might offer sacrifices to his honor. No language could be more humble and appropriate than this. The pious strain of sentiment was such as became a king of Israel." — *Jamieson.* (2 Chron. ii. 3–6.)

Huram replied to Solomon, in a most respectful and pious manner, showing that he had attained some knowledge of the true God. He sent a very skilful workman, whose mother was an Israelite and his father a Tyrian; as some have hinted, an omen of uniting Jew and Gentile in the gospel-temple (2 Chron. ii. 11–14).

Besides the numerous war-captives in the kingdom of Israel, there were multitudes of foreigners who, without having received circumcision, yet conformed to the rites of the Jewish religion. Some idea of the vast number of these sojourners may be derived from the fact that one hundred and fifty-three thousand of them were deemed fit to be employed in the erection of the temple, and about four thousand were selected for their intelligence and integrity, to be overseers of various departments of the work. In the times of Samuel and David, strangers took up their residence in Israel, and found employment there (1 Chron. xxii. 2). But the fame of Solomon, that attracted princes and ambassadors from foreign lands, also stimulated immigration from the surrounding countries; and multitudes came to participate in the prosperity of a nation distinguished for its wise rulers, its commercial enterprise, and the encouragement given to the liberal and useful arts.

Ver. 1. *Solomon began to build the house of the Lord . . . in Mount Moriah.* — On this mount Abraham was about to offer up his son Isaac (Gen. xxii. 1, 2); and here David interceded for his people, at the threshing-floor of Ornan, or Araunah (2 Sam. xxiv. 18). "In Eastern countries the site of the threshing-floor is selected according to the same principles which might guide us in the selection of the site of windmills. We find them usually on the tops of hills, which are on all sides exposed to the winds, the current of which is required in order to separate the grain from the chaff. It seems that the summit of Moriah, although large enough for the agricultural purposes of Araunah, had no level sufficient for the plans of Solomon. According to Josephus, the foundations of the temple were laid on a steep eminence, the summit of which was at first insufficient for the temple and the altar. As it was surrounded by precipices, it became necessary to build up walls and buttresses in order to gain more ground by filling up the interval with earth. The hill was also fortified by a threefold wall, the lowest tier of which was in some places more than three hundred cubits high; and the depth of the foundation was not visible, because it had been necessary, in some parts, to dig deep into the ground in order to obtain sufficient support. The dimensions of the stones of which the walls were composed were enormous. Josephus mentions a length of forty cubits. It is, however, likely that some parts of the fortifications of Moriah were added at a later period. The characteristics of the site of the Solomonic temple have undergone so many changes that it is at present scarcely possible to discern them." — *Kitto.*

Ver. 3. *Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed.* — First, in regard to the dimensions of the temple, according to the

specifications given by his father. These are given in cubits; but opinions differ as to the length of a cubit, some making it eighteen, and others twenty-one inches. The ground-form of the temple was like that of the tabernacle, only twice as large, while its materials were more solid and durable. It was a rectangular building, seventy cubits long from east to west, and twenty cubits wide from north to south, and thirty high. The dimensions given by Josephus vary from these; and it is difficult to reconcile the two statements.

VER. 4. *The porch* was twenty cubits in length, according to the breadth of the house, and rose to a height of an hundred and twenty cubits. It had the appearance of a tower, or the gateway of a palace.

He overlaid it within with pure gold. — It should be remembered that it was the internal splendor of the temple, and the vast courts and buildings attached to it, that constituted its grandeur, rather than the size of the edifice itself.

VER. 5. *The greater house*, — i. e., the holy places, that were connected with folding doors that were opened and shut with golden chains. The length, according to 1 Kings vi. 17, was forty cubits long from east to west, i. e., from the porch to the oracle. The wood was beautifully embellished with figures in relievo, of palm-trees and flowers.

VER. 6. *He garnished the house with precious stones.* — It was an ancient custom, among the Orientals, to embellish the walls of their rooms with stones having veins of various colors; and thus Solomon may have garnished the temple; also the marble that formed the pavement was very precious and beautiful.

VER. 7. *He overlaid the house, &c., with gold.* — "The whole interior was lined with boards richly decorated with carved work, clusters of foliage and flowers, among which the pomegranate and lotus, or water-lily, were conspicuous; and overlaid, excepting the floor, with gold, either by gilding or in plates (1 Kings vi.). — *Jamieson.*

VER. 8. *The most holy house.* — This was a perfect cube, twenty cubits in length, breadth, and height (see 1 Kings vi. 20). It was separated from the sanctuary by an impervious veil (Luke xxiii. 45), and was probably wholly dark (1 Kings viii. 12), but for the glory of the Lord that filled it.

Overlaid with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents. — At £4 per ounce, this is equal to £3,600,000.

VER. 9. *The weight of the nails.* — Dr. A. Clark thinks that bolts are here intended.

VERS. 10–13. *Two cherubim.* — The cherubim that Moses was commanded to make for the ark in the tabernacle were of pure gold, and were placed "in the two ends of the mercy-seat" (Exod. xxv. 18). But these "were made of olive-wood overlaid with gold. They were of colossal size, like the Assyrian sculptures, for each with expanded wings covered a space of ten cubits in height and length. Two wings touched each other, while the other two reached the opposite wall. Their faces were inward towards the most holy house, conformably to their use, which was to veil the ark." — *Jamieson.*

VER. 14. *The veil.* — The Hebrew signifies the divider, the separater, which hung between the holy and the most holy place. This richly wrought veil was suspended upon "the chains of gold before the oracle" (1 Kings vi. 21).

VER. 15. *Two pillars.* — Compare the account in 1 Kings vii. 15–22. These pillars were hollow and of brass, their united height being thirty-five cubits; or, a half-cubit being taken up by the capital or the base, the exact dimensions were thirty-six cubits. Each was from eighteen to twenty-one feet in circumference, and forty feet in height.

VER. 16. *And he made chains . . . and an hundred pomegranates.* — These pillars, or obelisks as some call them, were most richly ornamented. Combining with this description the more full account in 1 Kings vi. 17–19, we find nets of checker-work, i. e., "branch-work representing the branches of palm-trees; and wreaths of chain-work, plaited in the form of a chain, composing a sort of crown or garland. Seven of these were wound in festoons on one capital, and over and underneath them fringes, one hundred in a row. Two rows of pomegranates strung on chains ran round the capital, which itself was of a bowl-like, or globular form. These rows were designed to form a binding to the ornamental work to keep it from falling asunder; and they were so placed as to be above the chain-work, and below the place where the branch-work was. The chapiters upon the top of the pillars were of *lily-work*, representing the lotus leaf and flower; beautiful ornaments representing the stalks, leaves, and blossoms of lilies, of large dimensions, suited to the height of their position. They were the characteristic ornaments of Egyptian architecture, and probably borrowed thence by Solomon." — *Jamieson.*

VER. 17. *He reared up the pillars before the temple.* — These pillars were for ornament, rather than to give support, and formed a most appropriate and beautiful entrance to the splendid interior of the temple.

Jachin and Boaz. — The one on the right was called Jachin, which signifies "He shall establish." The one on the left was called Boaz, which signifies, "In it is strength." These names were symbolical, not so much of the strength and stability of the material temple, for this with the pillars were destroyed (Jer. lii. 17), but of the spiritual kingdom of God that was represented in the temple. Some find in Jachin a type of Christ, who came to establish a heavenly kingdom on earth; and, in Boaz, a type of the Church, which is founded to endure forever. The spiritual significance of these pillars and all their parts and ornaments has been brought out by one who seems to have been divinely aided in interpreting them.

The temple was surrounded by three stories of chambers each five cubits high (1 Kings vi. 10), and joined to the wall of the temple without. Above these there was ample room for windows to give ventilation and light to the temple (1 Kings vi. 4).

Two main courts surrounded the temple, the inner court that of the priests (1 Kings vi. 36; 2 Chron. iv. 9), and the outer court that of Israel. These were separated by a "middle wall of partition," with lodges for priests and Levites, for wood, oil, &c. (1 Chron. xxviii. 12, 13).

No sound of axe or hammer was "heard in the house while it was building (1 Kings vi. 7). A subterranean quarry has recently been discovered near Jerusalem, which affords the clearest evidence that the stones of the temple were dressed there, and moved on rollers to the site of the temple.

LESSON IV. — JULY 23.

THE TEMPLE DEDICATED. — 1 KINGS viii. 5–21.

5. And King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, *were* with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told or numbered for multitude.

6. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy *place*, *even* under the wings of the cherubim.

7. For the cherubim spread forth *their* two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above.

8. And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy *place* before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day.

9. *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made *a covenant* with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

10. And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy *place*, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord,

11. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.

12. ¶ Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

13. I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in forever.

14. And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood:

15. And he said, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled *it*, saying,

16. Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

17. And it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.

18. And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build a house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

19. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.

20. And the Lord hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.

21. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein *is* the covenant of the Lord, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Solomon laid the foundations of the temple, or the house of sanctuary, or the chosen house as it was sometimes called, in the year 1011 B.C., and about four hundred and eighty years after the building of the tabernacle by Moses. It was completed in the year 1004 B.C., having occupied seven years and six months in the building.

Solomon made the sacred utensils and furniture of the temple, *a molten sea* (1 Kings vii. 23), an immense semicircular vase seventeen feet and a half in diameter; *ten bases of brass* (ver. 27), i.e., four-wheeled carriages for the conveyance of the lavers; the altar of gold, and the table and candlesticks of gold (vers. 48, 49), and all the vessels that pertained to the house of the Lord. He also put among the treasures of the house the silver and gold and vessels that David his father had consecrated to the Lord (1 Kings vii. 51).

At the feast in the month Ethamin (October), the elders and chief men of Israel assembled in Jerusalem to attend the services of the

dedication of the temple to the Lord (1 Kings viii. 2). This was eleven months after the completion of the edifice; the delay being occasioned by Solomon's desire to choose the most fitting opportunity, when the greatest number of the people would be in Jerusalem. This was a jubilee year; and the king very appropriately commenced the solemn ceremonial a few days before the feast of tabernacles, which was instituted in commemoration of the Israelites dwelling in booths in the wilderness, as well as of the tabernacle which was then erected for the worship of God.

As the temple was to take the place of the tabernacle, it was most fitting that at this feast prayer should be offered that the privileges promised in connection with the services of the tabernacle might be continued to the nation in connection with those of the temple, and that the divine glory that sanctified the former might be manifested in the latter.

VER. 5. *And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel . . . were before the ark.* — The vast procession was made up of all the chief men of Israel, the heads of tribes and paternal chiefs, and multitudes of people from every part of the land. It was led by the king, doubtless, preceded by his body-guard, and the elders of the people. Priests were stationed along the route to offer an immense number of sacrifices. Josephus says that "the ground was moist with drink-offerings and sacrifices."

VER. 6. *And the priests brought in the ark.*—They followed, bearing the ark from its temporary resting-place on Mount Zion up to the temple, a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. Another procession brought the old Mosaic tabernacle from Gibeon, followed by the Levites, who bore the sacred vessels and ornaments of the tabernacle to the new house of the Lord. The ark was deposited in the oracle of the house, or the holy of holies, and placed under the wings of the cherubim made by Solomon (Ps. xviii. 10, lxxx. 1, Isa. vi. 1–3). Into this holy place no one was permitted to enter, except the high priest, and he only once in a year, on the great day of atonement.

VER. 8. *They drew out the staves.* — These staves were made of shittim-wood overlaid with gold. They passed through golden rings, and were used to carry the ark (Exod. xxv. 13–15). They were originally not to be drawn out; but, now that the ark was stationary, they were drawn out a little way, and left to project, that they might serve as a guide to the high priest when he went to officiate before the ark. For there was no light in the holy oracle except that shed by the glowing embers in the censer, and the mysterious rays that emanated from the mercy-seat.

VER. 9. *There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone.*— Nothing else was ever put into the ark but these tables of stone. Aaron's rod (Num. xvii. 10), the golden censer, and the manna (Exod. xvi. 33), which some suppose were placed in the ark, were laid before it in the most holy place.

VER. 10. *The cloud filled the house of the Lord.*—As the cloud, the symbol of the divine presence, rested upon the tabernacle in the time of Moses, and filled it with the divine glory so that Moses could not enter (Exod. xl. 34, 35), thus the cloud and the divine glory filled the temple so that the priests could not proceed with the services. This

gracious manifestation of the divine presence was the testimony of God's acceptance of the temple, as he had previously accepted the tabernacle. Precisely in what this glory consisted, we cannot determine. It may have been a dazzling brightness that filled the minds of the priests with astonishment or alarm, so that they could not remain. It convinced all that the God of Israel had here established his royal residence.

VERS. 12, 13. *Then spake Solomon.* — Standing upon a brazen platform that had been erected in front of the altar, Solomon first, in an apostrophe to God, whose presence had been so wonderfully manifested, expresses his devout thankfulness that he has been permitted to build a house for the Lord to dwell in and abide forever. The *thick darkness* refers to the holy of holies, that, having no windows, was dark, except when illumined by God's presence.

VER. 14. *The king turned his face about.* — After watching the mystic cloud that may yet have hovered about the temple, he turned to the people, who were standing up, and *blessed all the congregation of Israel.* As Moses, when the people had completed the tabernacle as the Lord had commanded them, pronounced upon them a blessing (Exod. xxxix. 43), and as David his father when the ark had been brought into the city, and the offerings were completed, blessed the people in the name of the Lord (2 Sam. vi. 18), so Solomon, on this solemn and memorable occasion, blesses the whole congregation.

VERS. 15–21. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.* — In most fitting words, Solomon expresses his fervent gratitude to God for the fulfilment of his promises. The Lord hath performed the work, and to him he ascribes all the glory.

LESSON V. — July 30.

Solomon's Prayer. — 1 Kings viii. 22–30.

22. ¶ And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

23. And he said, Lord God of Israel, *there is* no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:

24. Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled *it* with thine hand, as *it is* this day.

25. Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.

26. And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.

27. But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?

28. Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to-day:

29. That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, *even* toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.

30. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place: and when thou hearest, forgive.

Ver. 22. *Solomon stood before the altar.* — He did not occupy the canopied throne near a pillar at the entrance of the inner court (2 Kings xi. 14), but took his position in the outer court, east of the altar, on a brazen platform three cubits high, erected for the occasion (2 Chron. vi. 13). Here, kneeling (see ver. 54, and 2 Chron. vi. 13) as a humble suppliant, he spread forth his hands towards heaven. It is a fact worthy of notice, that the solemn act of consecrating the temple to God was not performed by the high priest, nor by any member of the Aaronic family, but by the king in person.

Ver. 23. *And he said, Lord God of Israel.* — Into this sublime prayer, the suppliant breathes the strongest faith and the loftiest aspirations, blended with the deepest humility. He addresses the Sovereign of the universe as the God of Israel, because of the special and numerous divine blessings he had bestowed upon the nation. It was indeed a sublime spectacle, thus to see the king of Israel before the splendid temple that he had completed, and, in the presence of a vast and reverential throng, praying with uplifted hands to the everlasting King. We may look upon him as a type of Christ, who is our King and Intercessor.

There is no God like thee. — The faith of the suppliant is based upon the cardinal doctrine of the unity and supremacy of the Deity. Other nations had their idols and fancied deities, whom they worshipped and confided in; but the king of Israel trusted in the only living and true God.

Who keepest covenant with thy servants, — that is, with those "that

walk before thee with all their heart." — There is here a clear acknowledgment of the necessity of obedience on the part of the subject, as well as the faithfulness of God, to secure the fulfilment of a covenant.

VER. 26. *And now . . . let thy word be verified, which thou spakest unto . . . David my father.* — "The reference is to the great promise in 2 Sam vii. 11–14. It was made to David before Solomon was born. It began to be verified at his birth, and still more on his completion of the temple, when the glory of the Lord was visible in it; but it pointed to a far greater, nobler, and more extensive kingdom than was embraced by the dominion of that magnificent monarch, happy and extensive as his dominion was (chap. iv. 20, 21). He had probably been taught by his pious father, who had made him well acquainted with that promise, to extend his views of it into the distant future. And, indeed, he appears, from the language used here, "will God indeed dwell on the earth?" to have been conscious that his own achievements were unable to exhaust the fulness of its meaning. For, from the announcement of that promise, the Messiah was expected as *the* king, the king of Israel, exalted on the throne of David, and in virtue of his close communion with the Lord Jehovah, an object of universal reverence, exercising justice and dispensing mercy to the various families of man." — *Jamieson's Commentary.*

VER. 29. *That thine eyes may be open towards this house night and day.* — God had made this promise to Moses: "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exod. xx. 24). By the special manifestation of his presence and glory in the temple, God had virtually recorded his name there. There he would be present, and receive the worship of his people, "night and day," and dispense blessings to them.

VER. 30. *Hearken to thy people . . . when they shall pray towards this place.* — When the Israelites were far distant from Jerusalem, they were accustomed, in their religious devotions, to turn their faces towards the temple; that they might participate in its services, and that their prayers might partake of the divine promises that enveloped, as a spiritual atmosphere, the house of the Lord.

Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place. — "That house of prayer, that Solomon was then dedicating, was a type of the spiritual temple afterwards to be built of living stones. And the purport of the king's petition, which was afterwards answered by a covenant, or solemn agreement, was, that whatever was spoken in the earthly temple should be heard and ratified in the heavenly temple." — *Jamieson.*

Following this portion of the prayer, Solomon specifies seven cases, in which he pleads for the merciful interposition of God, on condition that the people pray toward that holy place. The prayer concluded, again he pronounces a blessing "upon all the congregation of Israel" (1 Kings viii. 55). An immense number of sacrifices were then offered to the Lord (1 Kings viii. 62–64); and the people returned to their homes rejoicing in the goodness of the God of Israel (1 Kings viii. 66).

Solomon received the assurance that his prayer was heard (1 Kings ix. 3). God renews his covenant with him, and clearly lays down the principles upon which alone the king and people can secure happiness and prosperity.

LESSON VI. — August 6.

Solomon's Prosperity. — 1 Kings x. 1–10.

1. And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions.

2. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in in her heart.

3. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not *any* thing hid from the king, which he told her not.

4. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

5. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord: there was no more spirit in her.

6. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

7. Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it:* and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

8. Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom.

9. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

10. And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

Solomon, having accomplished the great religious work imposed upon him by his father, felt at liberty to build sumptuous structures, enlarge and fortify cities, and undertake various enterprises that would reflect honor upon the crown, and contribute to the dignity and power of his great kingdom. He spent twelve and a half or thirteen years in building his palace (1 Kings vii. 1), nearly double the time occupied in the erection of the temple, because he had not at hand the previous preparations for it, nor was there the same urgency that prompted him in providing a national place for religious worship. The Jews who returned from captivity were censured for dwelling in their own ceiled houses, while the house of God was lying waste (Hag. i. 4); but Solomon acted according to the spirit of Christ's direction, when he said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

Solomon also built the "House of the Forest of Lebanon," and a palace for "Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife" (1 Kings vii. 2, 8). It is difficult to determine whether these were separate buildings, or parts of one grand palace. From the form and proportions of the House of the Forest of Lebanon, it may have been a vast hall attached to the palace, similar to the large central halls in the Assyrian palaces. Its name may have been derived from the profusion of cedar timbers used in its construction.

To carry on his gigantic works, Solomon made a levy of men and money (1 Kings ix. 15). With these he not only built the house of the Lord, and his own magnificent palace, but he expended large sums upon Millo, a part of the fort of Jerusalem on Mount Zion; in

repairing the wall of Jerusalem; in fortifying Hasor, an important town on the northern boundary of the country; and also Megiddo, which had been a royal city of the Canaanites, lying on the great caravan road between Egypt and Damascus, important as a key to the north of Palestine, by the western lowlands. Robinson identifies Megiddo with a village now called Leijun, the Legio of the Romans. Solomon also fortified Gezer, or Gazer, on the northern border of Benjamin, which, though assigned as a Levitical city, continued to be occupied by the Canaanites. Here many battles had been fought between the Hebrews and the Philistines. At last it was conquered by the king of Egypt, and given as a dowry to his daughter, the wife of Solomon. Beth-horon the nether, Baaloth, and Tadmor were fortified or rebuilt (1 Kings ix. 15–18). Tadmor, a city of palms, called by the Greeks Palmyra, was anciently a superb city, ten miles in circumference. It was situated between Damascus and the Euphrates, in a dreary desert, and became the capital of a great kingdom, and the centre of an extensive commerce. It was rebuilt and fortified by Solomon, as a security against invasion from Northern Asia. It is now a magnificent ruin, having been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, on his march to the siege of Jerusalem.

The prosperity of Solomon is vividly set forth in his own words, in Eccl. ii. 4–9: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasures of kings and of provinces; I got me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem."

Ver. 1. *The Queen of Sheba.* — It is difficult to determine where Sheba was situated. Many think it was the Sabean kingdom of Yeman, of which Saba was the capital, near the southern part of Arabia. This region was probably settled by Sheba, the son of Joktan, of the race of Shem (Gen. x. 28; 1 Chron. i. 22). Yeman means south; and our Lord speaks of "the queen of the south" (Matt. xii. 42). The presents that she brought to Solomon were products of that country, according to Strabo, Pliny, and others; and tradition points in this direction.

The fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord. — This may refer to his superior knowledge of God, prompting him to erect a magnificent temple, and institute imposing services for his worship, or to the wonderful things that the Lord had done for him, or to both.

Hard questions. — Enigmas and riddles, such as the Orientals delighted to propose and solve, as tests of intellectual power; and also important and difficult questions.

Ver. 2. *A very great train, with camels that bare spices.* — She came with a retinue suited to her dignity and rank, and with costly presents for the king. Arabia produced the richest spices to be found in the world. Among these would be myrrh, "the resinous gum of an odoriferous shrub, valued as a favorite perfume, and fre-

quently given in ancient times as a present on account of its rarity and usefulness; spikenard, an unguent extracted from a species of valerian, which grows on the high and arid pastures of India; the sweet cane, the aromatic calamus of India; cinnamon procured from Ceylon; and cassia, another species of cinnamon, from the Malabar coast. All these highly-prized spices, which were either the native produce of Arabia, or, being brought to the parts of that country by the Ophir merchantmen, were carried into every part of the land by the trading caravans, were brought to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, as presents which she knew would be acceptable to that prince."

VER. 3. *Solomon told her all her questions.* — We are not informed what questions or subjects she brought before him. Some, influenced by the testimony of Josephus (Antiquities, book viii., chap. v., sec. 3), think that she did not propose to Solomon questions pertaining to philosophical principles, or moral and religious subjects, but only such as would display his skill and wit. It seems to us that the whole narrative is against this view. The queen takes a long journey, with many attendants and rich presents, attracted by "the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord;" and it is hardly to be supposed that her "hard questions" were designed for the display of his wit. Our Lord says, "She came from the uttermost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." This wisdom was displayed in answering all her inquiries. And he, doubtless, unfolded to her that wisdom that he himself describes: "The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her" (Prov. iii. 14, 15).

VER. 4. *When the queen had seen all Solomon's wisdom.* — Under the phrase, "the wisdom of Solomon," "the Hebrews comprehended a very large circle of mental endowments and useful qualities, not only speculative and practical knowledge. And therefore the Queen of Sheba's admiration must be considered as directed to the whole economy of his government; the comprehensive plans he formed for engaging the industry of his subjects at home, and for introducing rivers of wealth into his kingdom through the channels of foreign commerce; the order that reigned in the vast establishments of the palace and the temple; his exquisite skill in the fine arts; the literary works he composed, displaying a perfect familiarity with the entire range of the natural science of his age; and the penetrating insight he possessed into the principles of human nature. All these the Arabian princess had opportunities of witnessing during her sojourn at the court of Jerusalem." — *Jamieson.*

And the house that he had built. — This evidently refers to the palace, as appears from the words that follow concerning the court appointments.

VER. 5. *The meat of his table.* — This includes the immense amount, variety, and luxuriousness of his daily provisions (iv. 22, 23), as well as the superb equipage of the royal table.

The setting of his servants. — The various ranks of his servants, with the places assigned to them, and the orderly arrangements in the servants' hall, and at the various tables in the court. An Oriental sovereign was accustomed to be attended by a large number

of servants; and when we consider the numerous apartments of the palace, and the various establishments connected with it, Solomon must have had a vast multitude of domestics, native and foreign.

And the attendance of his ministers, — i. e., the standing, the station, of his ministers occupied at his public levees, and the court officers, who aided him in administering the government.

And their apparel. — While Solomon appeared in gorgeous robes, the dress of his attendants was very elaborate and splendid. When he rode to his pleasure-grounds, or elsewhere, he was attended by a numerous retinue of riders, tall and elegant young men, with armor, and attired in costly garments of Tyrian purple.

Cup-bearers. — Those who had the care of the drinking vessels, and providing the wines; an office of great importance in the palaces of ancient Oriental sovereigns.

And his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord. — Various renderings are given to this passage. According to the Septuagint: "And the holocaust (burnt offering) which he offered in the house of the Lord." Modern scholars say that the reference is to the famous viaduct which Solomon made from his palace to the temple. It was at least a peculiar entrance that was deemed worthy of special notice.

There was no more spirit in her. — Her astonishment was so great that it took away her breath (see Dan. x. 17).

VERS. 6, 7. *It was a true report that I heard. . . . And, behold, the half was not told me.* — She comes to listen to the wisdom of Solomon; and she finds more than she expected, both of wisdom and prosperity. In the reception of the queen by Solomon, we have a type of Christ. (1) He did not reject her, but cordially received her (John vi. 37). (2) He answered all her questions, and showed her his glory (John i. 14, vi. 68). (3) He accepted her gifts, and gave her more in return (John x. 11, 28, xvi. 24).

VER. 9. *Blessed be the Lord thy God.* — It is possible, but not probable, as Jewish writers affirm, that the Queen of Sheba was, through the influence of Solomon, converted to the worship of the true God. Hiram utters a similar expression to that in this verse (1 Kings v. 7). They are filled with reverence for a God who has dealt so bountifully with King Solomon.

VER. 10. *And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold* (£720,000), *and spices, and precious stones.* — The queen is not content with words of praise and thanks, but shows her gratitude by munificent and royal gifts. In return, she receives "all her desire," with valuable gifts, and departs in peace. It is said of the peaceful kingdom of the Messiah, "the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him (Ps. lxxii. 10, 11). All they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord" (Isa. lx. 6).

LESSON VII. — August 13.

The Call of Wisdom. — Prov. i. 20–33.

20. ¶ Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:
21. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*,
22. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?
23. Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.
24. ¶ Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
25. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:
26. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;
27. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.
28. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:
29. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord:
30. They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.
31. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.
32. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.
33. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

We pass from the prosperity of Solomon, to the inspired book of his wisdom. He is said to have spoken three thousand proverbs (1 Kings iv. 32); from which, during his life, he probably selected the first twenty-four chapters of this book. Chaps. xxv.–xxix. were also produced by him, and copied out by "his men" in the days of Hezekiah. Some writers have advanced the idea, that Solomon was only a collector of proverbs; but there has been nothing advanced to sustain this opinion, while the opposite view has the sanction of the most reliable ancient authorities. Their originality and inspiration are both well established. "Solomon lived five hundred years before the 'seven wise men of Greece,' and seven hundred before the age of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Thus it is very evident, whatever theory of his sources of knowledge be adopted, that he did not draw from any heathen repositories with which we are acquainted. It is far more probable, that by the various migrations, captivities, and dispersions of the Jews, heathen philosophers drew from this inspired fountain many of those streams which continue to refresh mankind, amid the otherwise barren and parched deserts of profane literature." — *Fausset.*

A proverb is a brief and forcible expression of some practical truth, or result of experience or observation. The word is derived from the Latin, and literally means, for *a word, speech, or discourse;* i.e., one expression for many. It is synonymous with "maxim," "adage," and "aphorism."

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of inspired maxims, rich in practical truths, and lessons for all classes of mankind.

Ver. 20. *Wisdom crieth without.* — In a beautiful personification, Wisdom in this chapter is introduced as publicly inviting men, in a most solemn manner, to accept her instructions, and avoid the paths

of folly and sin. She crieth not in secret, but on the street, and in public places, where she may be heard by all classes. She is not ashamed of her teachings; for she bears in her hand the treasures of wisdom, seeking the welfare of the young, the simple, and the ungodly. Compare Christ's instructions to his disciples, Matt. x. 27; Luke xiv. 21.

VER. 21. *She crieth in the chief place of concourse.* — Literally, in the places of greatest tumult she calleth. In the most crowded and tumultuous thoroughfares her voice is heard, sending forth its calls of goodness and mercy, as well as warning. At the gates where men are constantly passing to and fro, in every part of the city, she uttereth her words.

VER. 22. *How long, ye simple ones*, &c. — How long, ye ignorant and deceived ones, will ye love simplicity, and disregard the directions and teachings of Wisdom? In this verse, three classes are addressed. 1. The simple, or foolish. 2. Scorners, or mockers, who regard knowledge and truth with contempt. 3. Those who hate knowledge, and thus place a barrier between themselves and that which would make them wise.

VER. 23. *Turn you at my reproof.* — Be convinced by the arguments I present, and turn from your evil and perverse way. If you will but do this, I will pour out my Spirit unto you in copious measure. Wisdom will be in you, as a never-failing spring.

VERS. 24, 25. *Because I have called, and ye refused.* — The earnestness, the beseeching character of the call, is indicated by the stretching forth of the hand. Every thing is done by Wisdom to induce the simple-hearted and perverse to turn from their evil ways, and live. But if they refuse the call, and disregard the outstretched hand, they must take the consequences of their folly. If they set at nought the counsel, that is, reject it as of no value, and disregard every form of reproof, they must look for the terrific storm of divine indignation that will surely burst upon them.

VER. 26. *I will laugh at your calamity.* — The sense here is the same as in Ps. ii. 4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Instead of being moved by their fear, he is represented as mocking at it. As the fools have treated wisdom and knowledge and righteousness, so they are now, in turn, treated.

VERS. 27, 28. *When your fear cometh as desolation*, &c. — We have here a terrible and cumulative description of the calamities that will befall the wicked. When your fear cometh as desolation, literally a tumultuous noise denoting their utter confusion; and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, that is, with the rapidity and the all-prostrating blast of a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, a state of the deepest despair, — *then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer.* Their cries, the most diligent seeking, will now avail them nothing.

VERS. 29, 30. *For that they hated knowledge*, &c. — We have here the reasons for the fearful calamities that sweep over them. Their hatred of knowledge indicates the deepest depravity: not choosing the fear of the Lord, they reject the very beginning of wisdom.

VER. 31. *Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way.* — These terrible harvests are the fruit of their own sowing. They have

sown to the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. The Apostle Paul says (Gal. vi. 7), "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

VER. 32. *For the turning away of the simple*, &c. — Those who turn away from wisdom, and its salutary discipline, rush on to destruction; and prosperity is ever dangerous to virtue. "For every foolish or vicious person is either ignorant or regardless of the proper ends or rules for which God designs the prosperity of those to whom he sends it. Prosperity, also, as the nature of man now stands, has a peculiar force and fitness to abate men's virtues, and heighten their corruptions."

VER. 33. *But whoso hearkeneth unto me*, &c. — The man who listens to the call of Wisdom, rather than to the enticements of sin, shall dwell in perfect safety. The promise of God to his people was (Deut. xii. 10, 12), "But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies, so that ye dwell in safety . . . ye shall rejoice in the Lord your God." What a contrast we have here with the condition of those who reject the teachings of Wisdom, and set at nought the counsels of the Almighty!

LESSON VIII. — August 20.

The Value of Wisdom. — Prov. iii. 1–19.

1. My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments.
2. For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.
3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:
4. So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.
5. ¶ Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
7. ¶ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.
8. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.
9. Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase:
10. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.
11. ¶ My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:
12. For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.
13. ¶ Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding.
14. For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.
15. She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.
16. Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand riches and honor.
17. Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace.
18. She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is every one* that retaineth her.
19. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

Ver. 1. *My son.* — This form of address occurs three times in this chapter. It indicates the tender interest of the teacher in his pupil. It expresses the affection of a father, and his longing that the person addressed may receive the treasure that is above all price. My son, forget not my law, or my teaching; and let obedience to my commandments proceed from the heart.

Ver. 2. *For length of days*, &c. — As in Ps. xxi. 4, "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." It includes the idea of earthly prosperity, as promised to wisdom as a reward. Peace also is the result of keeping God's commandments: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3). "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7).

Ver. 3. *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee.* — Mercy, or love, and truth are often associated in the Book of Proverbs (see chaps. xiv. 22, xvi. 6, xx. 28). They are essential to a pure and spiritual life, and to the highest usefulness among men. The earnest exhortation is, Let not these blessed principles forsake thee. Keep them, cling to them. Bind them about thy neck, that they may be kept constantly in view. Write them upon the table of thy heart, that thou mayest constantly feel their influence.

Ver. 4. *So shalt thou find favor*, and good reputation, before God and man. Governed by the pure and heavenly principles of love and truth, one will secure the favor and approbation of God, and the good

opinion of mankind. We thus become God's children, and participate in all the advantages and blessings of his kingdom. We enjoy fellowship with the best and holiest of men.

VERS. 5, 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.* — "The fundamental principle of all religion consists in an entire self-commitment to the grace and truth of God, with the abandonment of every attempt to attain blessedness by one's own strength or wisdom" (see Ps. xxxvii. 3, cxviii. 8, 9). *In all thy ways acknowledge him*, strictly take notice of him, as ever present with you, as your support and guide; and he will direct you. How full of comfort is this promise! To be led by our heavenly Father, every day, and in all the paths in which we walk, to feel his hand holding ours, and leading us in the paths of heavenly wisdom, is an inexpressible joy. Happy, most happy, is the youth who will start in life obeying the commands presented in these two short verses. From how many mistakes and sorrows will he be saved!

VER. 7. *Fear the Lord.* — "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. i. 7). It is a fountain of life (xiv. 27). It is the beginning of wisdom (ix. 10). That is, the filial fear of the Lord, that draws the affections of the heart towards him, and inclines one to hate evil, and cheerfully obey God's commands.

VER. 8. *It shall be health to thy navel.* — From the moral course of conduct laid down, there shall go forth a healing power to the body, and a refreshing and invigorating influence to the bones. The latter is in contrast with "the languishing of the bones," or their drying up, under a fever heat, or the pangs of conscience (see Ps. xxxii. 3, 4). True piety promotes the health of the body.

VERS. 9, 10. *Honor the Lord with thy substance.* — Liberality in giving is one of the fundamental laws of the Jewish, as well as the Christian faith (see Exod. xxiii. 19; Deut. xviii. 4). "That the offering in sacrifice of the first fruits of the field, and of the other revenues of one's possessions or labors, was not only enjoined by their law upon the people of God, under the Old Testament, but that it was also practised by other ancient nations, as a usage connected with religious worship, appears from passages in classical authors." — *Lange.* By thus honoring God, we secure the greatest prosperity to ourselves. *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.* — "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth" (Prov. xi. 24). The blessings will follow that are promised in Deut. xxviii. 5–8.

VERS. 11, 12. *Despise not the chastening of the Lord.* — The Hebrew word translated *chastening* "signifies correction, discipline, and instruction. Teaching is necessary to show a man the way in which he is to go; discipline is necessary to render a teaching effectual; and often correction is requisite, in order to bring the mind into submission, without which it cannot acquire knowledge." Therefore no one should despise the chastening of the Lord, for it is a proof of his love. He sends sickness, sorrow, or affliction for our best welfare. He treats us as a father treats a son in whom he delighteth; and many can say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes" (Ps. cxix. 71).

VER. 13. *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,* — or, who hath found wisdom, who has this treasure as a permanent possession. By the term "wisdom," we understand here true piety, or the fear of

God, which is spiritual wisdom. Moses prays (Ps. xc. 12), "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;" or, so to improve our time as to devote it to the study and practice of true piety. Wisdom also means prudence and discretion in action, quickness of invention, and is taken for doctrine, learning (Acts vii. 22), and knowledge; all of which may be connected with the possession of the highest wisdom that men are here exhorted to seek.

VERS. 14, 15. *For the merchandise of it is better*, &c. — The accumulation of wisdom is better than the accumulation of silver, and the gain thereof than the finest gold. She is more precious than rubies or pearls; and the climax of her value is reached in the declaration "All the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." How true this is of Christ, who is the wisdom of God, who maketh us wise unto salvation, who is made unto us wisdom (1 Cor. i. 30)! For another view of the great value of wisdom, see Job xxviii. 16–19.

VER. 16. *Length of days.* — In her right hand she presents long life, as her first gift; and, in the left hand, riches and honor, to be enjoyed during this long life. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33). Try the experiment, and thus test the truth of this divine promise.

VER. 17. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness.* — Such ways as she directs us to take, are all pleasant to walk in. God's countenance shines upon them; and his love lines them with beautiful decorations, and, as we advance, new sources of joy are found. They are peaceful, with nothing to alarm or disturb the mind.

VER. 18. *She is a tree of life.* — Allusion is doubtless here made to the tree of life, mentioned by Moses in Gen. ii. 9, iii. 22. Its fruit preserves life, and gives all that makes living a blessing. This it does to every one that retaineth her. The riches, honors, pleasures, long life, and prosperity that flow from wisdom, are within the reach of all. "Divine wisdom teaches the true communism, — makes all things common."

VER. 19. *The Lord by wisdom.* — Here wisdom is taken for that creative divine power indwelling in God from eternity, that produced the substance of the earth, and the structure and economy of the heavens. It is presented in a personal, independent form, as in the words, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning. . . . When He prepared the heavens, I was there" (viii. 23, 27, &c.). Let us pray for the wisdom asked for in Col. i. 9–13.

LESSON IX. — August 27.

Honest Industry. — Prov. vi. 6–22.

6. ¶ Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:
7. Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,
8. Provideth her meat in the summer, *and* gathereth her food in the harvest.
9. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
10. *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:
11. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.
12. ¶ A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.
13. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;
14. Frowardness *is* in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.
15. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.
16. ¶ These six *things* doth the Lord hate; yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him:
17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
18. A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,
19. A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.
20. ¶ My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:
21. Bind them continually upon thine heart, *and* tie them about thy neck.
22. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

The sixth chapter of Proverbs consists of four independent admonitory discourses, varying in their length and contents. The second and third, entitled by one "Rebuke of the Sluggard," and, "Warning against Deceit and Violent Dealing," are embraced in this lesson under the head of "Honest Industry."

Vers. 6–8. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard.* — In all countries the ant is proverbial as an example of diligence, and an emblem of industry; and the sluggard is directed to go to this teacher, and learn wisdom from her ways. Without any overseer or ruler she provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. In chap. xxx. 25, we read, "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." It is not said that they lay up their food for the winter; for they sleep during the winter, and do not need food. It is simply stated that they provide their food in summer, and gather it in harvest, when it is most plenty. In the autumn and spring they are awake, and laboriously at work, as well as in the summer. The lesson taught by them is, that the season for earnest and unceasing toil in all departments is the harvest-time, when there is an abundance within one's reach. Compare the example of Joseph in Egypt (Gen. xli. 33–36).

Vers. 9, 10. *How long wilt thou sleep*, &c. — Literally, Till when wilt thou lie, O sluggard? Wilt thou continue lying forever? Wilt thou never rise? Then follows an ironical imitation of the language of the lazy man, "Yet a little sleep," &c.; "A little folding of the hands." This is the attitude of one who is preparing himself for sleep, and folds his hands and arms in inaction, that ought to be employed in vigorous work. In Eccl. iv. 5, we read, "The fool foldeth

his hands together, and eateth his own flesh;" that is, he exhausts his strength, uses up his fortune, and thus, by idleness, brings ruin upon himself.

VER. 11. *So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth.* — Literally, as one that walketh forwards and backward on the roads, a highwayman. In chap. xxiv. 34, we have, "Then cometh thy poverty apace," or, then cometh quietly thy poverty. "And thy want as an armed man;" literally, "as one armed with a shield; for even the assailing robber, since he must necessarily be prepared for resistance, must carry with weapons of offence the means of defence." Against such an armed foe, the poor man, weak in his poverty, is powerless.

VER. 12. *A naughty person.* — Literally, a man of Belial, or of worthlessness, a wicked man. Idleness and vice are usually allied; as, on the other hand, are industry and virtue. The wicked man "walketh with a froward mouth," or, in perverseness of speech. His heart becomes corrupt by his perverse and impure speech, and he is susceptible to the evil words of others (see chap. iv. 24, xxviii. 18).

VER. 13. *He winketh with his eyes.* — See a similar expression (chap. x. 10; Ps. xxxv. 19). "He speaketh with his feet." He communicates with signs in a mysterious way, first with one foot and then with the other. He hinteth with his fingers. In all these signs there is an implied evil purpose, and they are used by the low and vicious.

VER. 14. *Frowardness is in his heart.* — And hence "he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord." He lets loose contentions, or throws out matters of dispute. Instead of promoting peace, he stirreth up strife, and is a source of discord and misery in society.

VER. 15. *Suddenly shall he be broken.* — As he ought to be. He shall be shivered like a potter's vessel, and thus utterly destroyed (Ps. ii. 9; Isa. xxx. 14. Comp. chap. xxix. 1; Isa. i. 28).

VER. 16. *These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven.* — Arnot remarks, "There is one parallel well worthy of notice between the seven cursed things here, and the seven blessed things in the fifth chapter of Matthew. The first and last of the seven are identical in the two lists. 'The Lord hates a proud' is precisely equivalent to 'blessed are the poor in spirit;' and he that 'soweth discord among brethren' is the exact converse of the 'peacemaker.'"

VERS. 17–19. *A proud look*, or, haughty eyes. — Literally, high or lofty eyes. As in chap. xxx. 13: "There is a generation, oh, how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up;" expressive of those who are full of vanity, pride, and insolence (comp. Ps. xviii. 27, cxxxi. 1, Job xxi. 22, xl. 11). *A false witness that speaketh lies.* Literally, one that breathes lies. A false witness, one who on oath, before a court of justice, speaketh lies, is most hurtful in the sight of God (see chap. xxv. 18, xix. 5, 9). These six or seven vices are all not only great sins in the sight of God, but they are manifestations of hatred to one's neighbor, and a violation of the second table of the Decalogue. They are intensified with a degree of falseness and malice that renders them destructive to human happiness, and hence objects of the abhorrence of a holy God, and deserving of his righteous judgments.

VERS. 20, 21. *My son, keep thy father's commandment.* — The only way to avoid the sins and evil courses that have been pointed out is

for youth to follow the instructions of their pious parents. Their commandments and laws, they are exhorted to bind continually upon their heart. In chap. iii. 3, the exhortation is, "Write them upon the tablet of thy heart." Every thing outward — our looks, words, and deeds — depends upon the state of the heart. We cannot emphasize with too much earnestness the necessity of resisting evil and impure thoughts that seek access to the heart. With every one the battle is fought here. Every youth who obeys the command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is the mightiest of conquerors. Crowns await him in this life, and in that which is to come.

VER. 22. *When thou goest, it shall lead thee.* — The law of God, which "is light" (ver. xxiii.), shall lead thee, and keep thee from the dark and dangerous paths of sin. *When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee.* — It will supply the mind with good thoughts even in dreams, and afford protection in the hours of sleep. "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." It shall be thy constant companion, counsellor, and friend.

LESSON X. — September 3.

Intemperance. — Prov. xxiii. 29–35.

29. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?
30. They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.
31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.
32. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.
33. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.
34. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
35. They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick; they have beaten me, *and* I felt *it* not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

In this chapter we have a series of warnings against the chief forms of sensual indulgence, and exhortations to the practice of temperance and virtue. First, there is reference to an undue gratification of the appetite at the tables of rulers and great men, and the supposed enjoyments and advantages of intercourse with envious men, with a warning against covetousness (vers. 1–8). Then follow warnings against rude conversation (ver. 9); against the greedy exercise of violence towards the fatherless, and others who are weak (vers. 10, 11); against an injurious forbearance in the discipline of children (vers. 12–18); against intercourse with wine-bibbers and the gluttonous (vers. 19–21); against a proud disregard of what is due to parents (vers. 22–25); against being insnared by wanton women (vers. 26–28); and against the awful vice of drunkenness (vers. 29–35).

Ver. 29. *Who hath woe?* — The evil of intemperance, and the true character of the vice, are here set forth by a vivid picture of its ruinous results. These results are connected with indulgence in strong drink by the universal and unalterable law of cause and effect. The intemperate man can no more escape the consequences of his sensual course than he can fly from the laws of nature, or reverse the order established by divine Providence. Some of these consequences are presented in this verse in the form of questions, to arouse attention to them, and give to them the impressiveness which they demand. Who hath woe, sorrow, contentions, babbling, wounds without cause, redness of eyes? Who is there so afflicted, so demented, so repulsive, as to answer this description? It would seem as though one of these burdens was enough for any one to carry. But to have a soul filled with woe, a spirit active only in contentions, an intellect that might soar with the angels, babbling out unmeaning and incoherent utterances, "wounds got by falling out about nothing," and eyes blood-shotten with excessive drink, or black or blue from fighting, — we do not wonder, that, under such burdens, men stagger, and fall to the earth. The physical is certainly most expressive of the moral.

Ver. 30. *They that tarry long at the wine.* — Here are found the class that have been described. They are referred to in Isa. v. 11. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night till wine inflame them!"

That go to seek mixed wine. — Such meet in some house or place of public resort, and drink together strongly spiced wines, or mixed liquors, that are more intoxicating than pure wines. Social drinking leads to private indulgence, and mild wines create a taste for stronger liquors; and usually, as the stomach grows weaker, and the body becomes enfeebled and unable to resist the foe, the drink craved is of a more fiery and consuming character.

VER. 31. *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red*, or when it sparkleth in the cup, literally "giveth out, or showeth its eye," or when it glideth smoothly. Of this latter expression two interpretations have been given, — one based upon the smooth flow in the glass of rich, oily wine, and the other upon its smooth, pleasant flow, as it is swallowed. The color of the wine, its sparkling eye, and its smooth flow, as well as the odor, all make their tempting appeals.

VER. 32. *At last it biteth like a serpent.* — The acute miseries of drunkenness, the bite and the sting, are here contrasted with the temptation. That which has fascinated the eye is found in the end to be a deadly poison.

VER. 33. *Thine eyes shalt behold strange women.*—Vices usually go together. Admitting one into the open door of the soul, others follow. The imagination, taken possession of by the devil of intoxication, pictures to the mind other forms of sinful indulgence; and the will seems helpless in its power.

VER. 34. *Shall be as one in the midst of the sea.* — "Probably not one who is out in the midst of the high seas, but one who is in the depths of the sea (Jonah ii. 4), and therefore one who is as unconscious, with the spirit as completely removed from all previous surroundings, as a drowned man lying upon the deep sea bottom."

As one that sleepeth on the top of a mast. — A vivid image of one reeling or swinging to and fro on the top of a mast, moved by every wave, totally unconscious of the perils that every instant threaten his life. Who will be so simple, so void of understanding, so reckless of consequences, as to voluntarily place himself in such a position? The mariner may cling to the mast, and outride the storm. But the drunkard is there bereft of his senses and his strength. The wild tempest is without, and woes and sorrows are within. Alas! how many thousands and tens of thousands of our countrymen are there! How many fall every day from the masthead, and are dashed in pieces!

VER. 35. *They have stricken me. I have not felt it.* — He has become almost insensible to blows, is reduced to the lowest possible condition, so that the greatest bodily abuse does not affect him; and yet he resolves to seek again his cups. The maddening wine still allures him on. Nothing has power over him but the eye of the serpent. Charmed, fascinated by that, he will follow it to destruction. Staggering under his heavy woes, exhausted by his incoherent babblings, with an inflamed and diseased body, with a soul on fire of hell, he follows his seducer, helpless, hopeless. When the young look upon the sparkling wine, let them think of the bite of the serpent, and the sting of the adder.

LESSON XI. — September 10.

The Excellent Woman. — Prov. xxxi. 10–31.

10. ¶ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies.
11. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.
12. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.
13. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.
14. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.
15. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.
16. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
17. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.
18. She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good: her candle goeth not out by night.
19. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.
20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet.
22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing *is* silk and purple.
23. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.
24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it;* and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
25. Strength and honor *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.
26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.
27. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.
28. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her.
29. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.
30. Favor *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
31. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Ver. 10. *Who can find a virtuous woman?* — This language expresses the idea of a wish; and is equivalent to, "Would that every one might find so great a treasure as a virtuous woman!" *For her price is far above rubies*, or pearls. Writers on the countries of the East show the force of this language, and of the description given in this chapter, in contrast with the ordinary ignorance, weakness, and worthlessness of the women. In those lands, a woman of superior physical and moral qualities is of far more value than rubies.

Ver. 11. *So that he shall have no need of spoil.* — The reference is to the spoil of war. This is a strong expression to describe the great profit which an efficient wife brings to her husband, by her co-operation with him in his occupation. His heart doth safely trust in her on this account, and because of her careful management of the affairs of the household.

Ver. 12. *She will do him good.* — In good deeds, as well as kind words, having his happiness constantly in view *all the days of her life.*

Ver. 13. *She seeketh wool and flax*, — and thus provides herself with materials for the products of her feminine skill. *She worketh willingly with her hands;* literally, laboreth with her hands' pleasure. Her work is her pleasure, as it is with all who appreciate activity and industry. Among the Greeks, Romans, and Jews, women even of the highest rank worked with their hands at the various kinds of occu-

pation necessary for the support or comfort of their families. In modern times this custom has become, to some extent, obsolete.

VER. 14. *She is like the merchants' ships.* — She buys or imports materials, and sells her products to foreigners, and thus brings in gain from remote regions. She also looks well to the future, and provides, in advance, for the wants of her household.

VER. 15. *She riseth while it is night.* — She is a rigid economist of time. Instead of spending the hours of night in gayeties and dissipation that would unfit her for the duties of the day, she rises early, and, when the days are short, before daylight, and prepares food for her family, and assigns the tasks to her maidens, portioning out to them the materials with which they are to work. Thus every thing is done orderly, and her management of servants is a great success. Such an example is certainly worthy of imitation.

VER. 16. *She considereth a field, and buyeth it.* — with the money earned with her own hands; and also, from the fruit of her toil, *she planteth a vineyard.* Such enterprise and success is certainly unusual. Still there are instances of thrift in modern times, among wives and widows, that are worthy of the highest commendation.

VER. 17. *She girdeth her loins with strength, &c.* — She takes care of her health, which is a most important Jewish and Christian duty. This she does, not only by useful labor, but by healthful exercise. She avoids every thing that deprives her of strength or physical vigor for the duties of life. Would that the consciences of women and men were more enlightened, or more exercised, in regard to *the solemn duty* of preserving their health! When we consider to what an extent our happiness, intellectual vigor, and power for usefulness, depend upon bodily health, and remember that the "body is the temple of the living God," we are warranted in urging the preservation of health as *a solemn duty*, incumbent upon all.

VER. 18. *She perceiveth that her merchandise is good.* — She is careful to manufacture the best articles, that they may meet with a ready sale, and give satisfaction to purchasers. When necessary, she works by candle-light; or, as Dr. A. Clarke says, "Her candle, or lamp, burns all night, which is of great advantage in case of sudden alarm; and, in the times and places where there were so many *banditti*, this was a very necessary family regulation."

VER. 19. *She layeth her hands to the spindle.* — "She takes the distaff, that on which the wool or flax was rolled; and the spindle, that by twisting of which she twisted the thread with the right hand, while she held the distaff in the guard of the left arm, and drew down the thread with the fingers of the left hand. . . . The spindle and distaff are the most ancient of all the instruments used for spinning, or making thread." — *A. Clarke.*

VER. 20. *She stretcheth out her hand to the poor.* — Literally, her hollow or bent hand, in which she presents her gifts. She is very charitable to the poor; and, to those in great need, *she reacheth forth her* hands, that is, both hands filled with the means of relief.

VERS. 21, 22. *She is not afraid of the snow.* — That is, she provides against the cold, with clothes of crimson wool (woollen garments of crimson color), in which her household are clad. She also makes *coverings of tapestry*, carpeting for her guests to sit upon, or quilted work for her beds. *Her clothing is silk and purple.* "In the costly articles

of apparel that the woman wears, the contrasted colors, white and purple, appear again." The purple is supposed to be the product of a precious fluid obtained from a large shell-fish found on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea.

VER. 23. *Her husband is known in the gates.* — Her excellent qualities contribute to his reputation; and he is an elder among his people, and sits as a magistrate in the gates.

VER. 24. *She maketh fine linen*, &c., — that is, exceedingly fine inner garments, such as shirts, or fine muslin coverings; some of which are so very fine, that, when spread on the grass, they are scarcely discernible. She dealt also in girdles, — a general and expensive article of dress. They are often highly ornamented with gold and silver thread worked into flowers, and various beautiful devices.

VER. 25. *Strength and honor.* — Strong and beautiful is her clothing; or figuratively, for moral character, she is vigorous and honorable. In the future she can rejoice, reflecting upon the past, or upon the ample provisions she has made for her household.

VERS. 26–27. *She openeth her mouth with wisdom*, &c. — Her moral qualities are now presented. Her speech is full of wisdom and intelligence; and, more than all, *her tongue is the law of kindness.* — This law governs her in her intercourse with her husband, her children, her servants, and all with whom she has dealings. She *looketh well to the ways of her household*, — seeing that all the members receive religious instruction, and walk in the paths of virtue.

VERS. 28, 29. *Her children arise up.* — Those whom she has nurtured and educated in the fear and love of God now rise up to bestow upon her blessings. Her husband gives her the highest praise, in the words, "Many daughters (or women) have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

VER. 30. *Favor is deceitful.* — Favor, or grace of personal manner, is a deception; and beauty is a breath, that soon passes away. But *a woman that feareth the Lord*, that has spiritual grace, and the beauty of religious virtues, is worthy of the highest praise.

VER. 31. *Give her of the fruit of her hands.* — The fruits of her character and life form her best eulogy. These are eloquent in her praise in the gates, where the population of the city gather, and large assemblies meet.

Nothing can be added to the simple beauty of this portrait of a wife and mother.

LESSON XII. — SEPTEMBER 17.

A GODLY LIFE. — ECCL. xii. 1-14.

1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
2. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:
3. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,
4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;
5. Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high, and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:
6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.
7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
8. ¶ Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity.
9. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs.
10. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was* written *was* upright, *even* words of truth.
11. The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.
12. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.
13. ¶ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.
14. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first seven verses contain "an admonition to fear God during youth, and not leave this to old age, the period when approaching death announces itself through many terrors, — here depicted in a series of poetical figures drawn from the various realms of nature and human life." The last seven verses embrace a review of the whole book, having reference to the personal worth of the author, and the importance of his teachings.

VER. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* — Remember the God who made you, — your Creator, Preserver, and bountiful Benefactor. Remember him with reverence for what he is in his nature, divine attributes, and perfections. Remember him with gratitude for daily temporal and spiritual blessings, for the treasures of knowledge, and the light of truth, for the gifts of his Son and the Holy Spirit, for his providential care and fatherly love.

Remember him now in the days of thy youth, that there may be before thee a long, useful, and happy life; that the temptations and perils connected with the season of youth may be avoided, and that all the powers of the mind and affections of the heart may, in the fulness of their vigor, be consecrated to God. Remember him before the evil days come when sinful habits have been formed, and the years draw nigh when the heart, hardened by evil courses, takes no pleasure in religious things.

VER. 2. *While the sun or the light*, &c. — The darkening of the sun and the light are here expressive of the diminishing joys of life in advanced age; and the clouds are synonymous with the infirmities of old age. In the springtime of life, before the dreary winter comes, God should be remembered, obeyed, and loved. Then there will be no darkening of the sun, but the path will be "as the shining light, that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

VER. 3. *In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble*, &c. — The human body is here compared to a house. It is not unfrequently in the Scriptures compared to a house, or a tent (see Isa. xxxviii. 12; Job iv. 19; 2 Cor. v. 1; 2 Pet. i. 13). The various parts of the body are presented in a series of striking metaphors. By the keepers of the house we understand the arms and the hands, that are used to protect the body, but which, in aged persons, become feeble and tremulous. *And the strong men shall bow themselves.* — The reference here is to the legs, that have lost their muscular power, and bend under the weight of the body. Compare the crooked knees of Job iv. 4, the weak knees of Ps. cix. 24, the feeble knees (Isa. xxxv. 3). *The grinders cease because they are few.* — The teeth decayed, and but few remaining to masticate food. *Those that look out of the windows.* — The eyes, that have become impaired by age, and the sight of which is dim.

VER. 4. *The doors shall be shut in the streets.* — The reference here is to the mouth, the lips of which are compared to the two sides or folds of a door (comp. Ps. cxli. 3; Mic. vii. 5). *In the streets*, or, literally, "on the street, points to the function of the mouth as a means of communication with the outer world, whether by the reception of food, or the sending out of words or other sounds." *When the sound of the grinding is low.* — One translates this "the voice of the mill," the teeth being regarded as a mill, from which the voice comes. In old age it becomes feeble and low. *He shall rise up at the voice of the bird;* referring to the sleeplessness of old persons, who are disturbed by the chirping of the sparrow, or any other small bird. *The daughters of music:* the organs that produce and enjoy music, the voice and the ear, become enfeebled.

VER. 5. *When they shall be afraid of that which is high*, of ascending a hill or any eminence; *and fears shall be in the way*, and alarm them as they totter along in their feebleness. *And the almond-tree shall flourish.* — The white blossoms of the almond-tree here symbolize the silvery locks of the aged. *The grasshopper*, or the locust, shall be a burden, so much is the man's strength diminished: or, some compare the dry, shrivelled old man to this insect. *Desire shall fail.* — The natural bodily desires, and their gratification, shall fail or be abolished. *Because man goeth to his long home*, to the grave, from which there is no return. (Comp. Job vii. 10; Ps. xlix. 12.) He goes from all the employments and joys of earth.

VER. 6. *Or ever the silver cord be loosed*, &c. — Often, in the East, a lamp of frail material was suspended from roofs, by cords woven of silk and silver. The cord breaking, the golden bowl, or gilded lamp, was dashed in pieces. Thus the silver cord, the spinal marrow, which is white and precious as silver, is loosed as death approaches. *The golden bowl is broken.* — As the vessel containing oil is broken, so the body containing the blood, that is the supporter of life, meets with a

similar fate. "Then shall the pitcher with which we used to fetch up water for the constant supply of life, and the repair of its decays, be broken even *at the fountain*. And the wheel, all those organs that serve for the collecting and distributing of nourishment, shall be shattered, and disabled to do their office any more." Some commentators seem to find here the theory of the circulation of the blood.

VER. 7. *Then shall the dust return to the earth.* — The two natures of man are here distinctly set forth. The material part, made of the dust of the earth, returns to its original source. The spiritual and immortal part returns to God who gave it (comp. Gen. iii. 19, ii. 7; also Ps. civ. 29, 30).

VER. 8. *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher.* — We come now to the general review of the book, which begins with the sentence which opened the book (chap. i. 1, 2), namely, a lamentation over the vanity of all earthly things.

VERS. 9, 10. *Because the preacher was wise.* — It is not enough that a teacher be wise and learned, but he must communicate his knowledge to others. He must teach also with acceptable words, that which is true, lovely, and edifying (Phil. iv. 8; 1 Pet. iv. 11).

The *many proverbs* here refer to the sayings of Solomon in the book of Proverbs.

VER. 11. *The words of the wise are as goads*, piercing deeply into the mind; inspired words, fastened in the memory, as by *nails* by the master of assemblies, or rather by the master of collections; that is, collections of inspired sayings, under one shepherd. The teacher is not only a wise man, but also a shepherd, the leader of a congregation, a priestly teacher.

VER. 12. *Of making many books*, &c. — The idea is, that the study of the numerous human productions, to the neglect of inspired writings, wearies the body, without profiting the mind. This is certainly as true now as at that period. Were the time that is given to frivolous literature devoted to the study of the holy Scriptures, and reflection upon its sacred truths, the soul would be enriched with the choicest fruits of knowledge. To many consecrated Christians the Bible is not only the most important, but the most fascinating of books. They delight in its study, and it is to them a source of exquisite joy, surpassing that afforded by all human productions.

VER. 13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.* — The grand inference and summing-up of the whole book is, Fear God, and keep his commandments; fear him with a holy reverence; love him with all the soul, mind, and strength; and keep all his commandments. *For this is the whole duty of man* (Rev. xxii. 14).

VER. 14. *God shall bring every work into judgment.* — God is so just and holy that he will allow no hidden sin to go unpunished, nor any secret good to be unrewarded. The judgment day will test the work and character of every man; revealing what is vanity, and what is a solid foundation of immortal happiness.

FOURTH QUARTER.

LESSONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

LESSON I. — October 1.

STEPHEN'S DEFENCE. — ACTS vii. 1-19.

1. Then said the high priest, Are these things so?
2. And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,
3. And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.
4. Then he came out of the land of the Chaldæans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.
5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.
6. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.
7. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.
8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs.
9. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,
10. And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.
11. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.
12. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.
13. And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.
14. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.
15. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,
16. And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father* of Sychem.
17. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,
18. Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.
19. The same dealt subtilely with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

The closing lesson of the second quarter gave an account of the institution of the office of deacons (Acts vi.), and the election of seven men "full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom" (Acts vi. 3), to attend to the duties of this office. Of Stephen, one of the seven, it

is recorded, that he, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts vi. 8). His zeal and success excited the opposition of the Jews; and he was charged with speaking "blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (Acts vi. 11). He had doubtless maintained boldly, that the ancient Jewish religion was simply preparatory to the new dispensation, and that Christ, who was greater than Moses and was divine, had come to fulfil the ceremonial law. Hence he is held up as a false teacher, or an impostor; and blasphemy against Moses is esteemed also blasphemy against God, because the institutions of Moses were of divine appointment.

VER. 1. *Then said the high priest.* — The high priest was president of the council, or sanhedrim, before which Stephen was brought for trial.

Are these things so? — Stephen is permitted to speak in defence of the charges brought against him. In his speech he reviews God's dealings with his people from Abraham to the temple, showing a regular progressive development in their religious life; involving changes in the institutions of divine worship, from altars to tabernacle, and from tabernacle to temple, and from temple to the universal worship of Him who said (Acts vii. 49), "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool."

VER. 2. *And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken.* — The opening of the speech is respectful and conciliatory, the term "fathers" being applied with reverence to the members of the council, and "brethren," a recognition of the common nationality of the spectators who were present. It is probable that this address was delivered in the Greek language, as this was generally spoken and understood in Palestine, and as we have reason to believe that Stephen was a Hellenist.

The God of glory. — By this descriptive name of God, Stephen, at the commencement of his address, seeks to counteract the slanderous report brought against him of blaspheming his Maker. Besides, his mind is in an enthusiastic glow of contemplation of the inconceivable grandeur and boundless sovereignty of the Deity; and to him at this hour, while his face was, to those who looked upon him, "as it had been the face of an angel," the God above him was a "God of glory." He was robed in those wonderful celestial splendors which usually attended the earlier manifestations of himself. See Exod. xxiv. 16; Lev. ix. 23.

Our father Abraham . . . in Mesopotamia. — The Jews were proud to call Abraham their father; and, in the respect felt for his memory, Stephen cordially shared. Mesopotamia lies between the River Euphrates and the Tigris, the word signifying *between the rivers*. Here the ancestors of Abraham lived (Gen. xxiv. 4); and from Ur he accompanied his father Terah to Charran (Haran), a very ancient city in the northern part of Mesopotamia.

VER. 3. *Get thee out of thy country.* — The command here referred to is found in Gen. xii. 1. While Stephen represents this command as reaching Abraham anterior to his residence with his family in Haran, according to this record (Gen. xii. 1) it would seem that it came to him while dwelling in Haran; but the statements of Philo and Josephus clearly show that it was the opinion of the Jews in

that age, that Abraham had already received a divine command while he dwelt in Ur. In Gen. xv. 7, God says, "I am Jehovah who led thee forth from Ur in Chaldæa to give thee this land." Ur was in the province of Chaldæa, or Babylonia, comprising the southern portion of the territory between the Tigris and Euphrates, while Mesopotamia embraced the northern region.

VER. 4. *When his father was dead he removed him*, &c. — According to the narrative, it was the original intention of Terah, who took with him his son Abram, together with Sarai and Lot, on leaving Ur, to proceed to Canaan. But he went no farther than Charran (Haran), where he remained until his death (Gen. xi. 31, 32; xii. 5. The exact period of Abraham's departure from Charran is a question that has awakened discussion among commentators, too lengthy for us to present. Even if Stephen had not been chronologically accurate in his rapid summary, this would not detract from "the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts iv. 10).

VER. 5. *And he gave him none inheritance in it.* — It is true (Gen. xxiii.) that Abraham purchased of Ephron a field with a cave, for a burying place; but as yet he had come into possession of no land as an inheritance from God. The fact to which Stephen gives prominence is, that the divine promise in reference to the land was given to Abraham before a child was born to him; and hence the possession of the inheritance, and the birth of an heir, were the free gifts of God's grace.

VER. 6. *And God spake on this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land.* Reference is made here to the passage in Gen. xv. 31; and the strange land spoken of is Egypt. Here the seed of Abraham were brought "into bondage," or enslaved and treated with cruelty, for four hundred years. In Exod. xii. 41, and in Gal. iii. 17, the number of years given is four hundred and thirty. Stephen probably intended to give the time in round numbers; as Josephus, who makes the period four hundred and thirty years, yet sometimes calls it four hundred.

VER. 7. *The nation . . . will I judge.* — The Egyptians he will visit with punishment, as he did with plagues. *Said God.* — See Gen. xv. 14.

VER. 8. *And he gave the covenant of circumcision.* — The covenant that God graciously made with Abraham and his seed was attested by the rite of circumcision (Gen. xvii. 7–11). By this distinctive sign, God set apart a covenant people for himself. *The twelve patriarchs.* — The term means the head, or founder, of a family, then of the tribes.

VER. 9. *The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph.* — Jealousy and envy influenced them to remove Joseph out of the way, and to degrade him. But God was with him. He sustained him, and stood between him and the treacherous designs of his brethren.

VER. 10. *Delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor*, &c. — God did all this. The point that Stephen is arguing to establish is, that this history is the development of the divine plan for carrying forward the Church from one stage of progress to another. God allows affairs to reach a crisis, and then interposes for deliverance, and all along causes the wrath of man to praise him.

VERS. 11–13. *There came a dearth over all the land*, &c. — In these verses, we have presented other links in the great chain of divine

providences, — the famine, the corn in Egypt, the departure of the brethren, the recognition and reconciliation between Joseph and his brethren.

VER. 15. *Threescore and fifteen souls.* — In this number, seventy-five souls, Stephen follows the Septuagint version, whereas in the original Hebrew the number seventy is mentioned (see Gen. xlvi. 27; Exod. i. 5). Adding the five sons of Ephraim and Manasseh, born in Egypt after Jacob's removal, would make the seventy-five. But Stephen's object was to show that this family, consisting at the utmost of only seventy-five persons, became a great nation in Egypt.

VERS. 15, 16. — *Jacob died, and our fathers, and were carried over,* &c. — They, that is, our fathers, were carried over into Sychem, now known as Neapolis, Nablous. Jacob, who is separated from the rest in the preceding context, was buried in the sepulchre at Machpelah (Gen. lxix. 30), which was in Hebron (Gen. xxiii. 19).

That Abraham bought. — There is an apparent discrepancy here, which has perplexed commentators. Jacob bought the field to which Stephen refers (see Gen. xxxiii. 16); and there the bones of Joseph, taken from Egypt, were buried (see Josh. xxiv. 32): while Abraham bought the sepulchre at Hebron (see Gen. xxiii. 17–20). Emmor is the same as Hamor of the Old Testament. Some writers account for the apparent discrepancy, by supposing that the word "Abraham" is an interpolation of some transcriber, from the original text; as many of the old manuscripts are without it, and some have in its place "our father," referring to Jacob. Lange says, "It is, however, the most judicious course to admit frankly, that with reference to the purchase of the ground, and the burial of Jacob, it might easily occur that Stephen, whose discourse treated an entirely different and loftier theme, should in his rapid course, confound two analogous transactions."

VER. 17. *When the time of the promise drew nigh.* — The speaker now enters upon the second period in the history of redemption, namely, the times of Moses, vers. 17–45. The fulfilment of the promise is at hand, when, after four hundred years of sojourning and bondage, the descendants of Abraham should come forth (ver. 7), and serve God in Holy Land. *The people grew and multiplied.* — It was in accordance with the divine plan, that this family should grow into a nation, under circumstances that would prepare them as instruments for the fulfilment of other great and precious promises.

VER. 18. *Till another king arose.* — One of another race or dynasty; who *knew not Joseph*, that is, who felt no interest in him, or respect for him. Who this new king was, is not positively known. "Wilkinson understands it to have been Amoses, or Ames, the first of the eighteenth dynasty; others, that it was Rameses, the sixth of that dynasty. Champollion holds that it was Mandomei, 1585–1565 before the Christian era. The doubts on this point may yet be cleared up. In a library lately discovered at Memphis, the history of this period is said to have been found." — *Jacobus.*

VER. 19. *The same dealt subtilely,* &c. — This strange king dealt harshly with the children of Israel, afflicting them with severe burdens, and causing their new-born children to be exposed to death. Pharaoh charged all his people (Exod. i. 22) to cast the new-born sons of the

Israelites into the Nile. The Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard bondage, and in all manner of service in the field (Exod. i. 14).

To the end they might not live. — The king desired to prevent their increase, that they might not become a formidable power. But they were under the care and guidance of an invisible King, whose authority and designs were not taken into the account by the king of Egypt.

LESSON II. — October 8.

Stephen's Defence. — Acts vii. 35–50.

35. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

37. ¶ This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

39. To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40. Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of* forty years in the wilderness?

43. Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

45. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46. Who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47. But Solomon built him a house.

48. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49. Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what *is* the place of my rest?

50. Hath not my hand made all these things?

In the sketch of the life of Moses in Egypt that precedes the lesson, we have the following points presented. As an infant he was exceeding fair (ver. 20): fair to God, or before God. He was a child upon whom spectators looked with wonder and admiration (*Philo*). He was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter, and reared in a foreign court (ver. 21); was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and deeds (ver. 22). At forty years of age he volunteered to be the deliverer of his brethren (vers. 23–26), but was rejected as such (ver. 27), and forced to flee for his life (ver. 29). Forty years afterwards the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, with a commission from God (vers. 30–34).

Ver. 35. *This Moses whom they refused.* — The use of the demonstrative pronoun in connection with the name Moses, in this and the following verses, is clearly "designed to exhibit the contrast between the divine call that Moses received, and the work assigned to him by God, on the one hand, and the treatment, on the other hand, which he received from his own people, who disowned and rejected him." This contrast was calculated to show his hearers their resemblance to a former generation, and to warn them of the consequences of the

course they were pursuing towards the divine ruler and deliverer that God had sent in the person of his Son.

VER. 36. *He brought them out*, &c. — Rather, this one, Moses, sent by God as their deliverer, brought them out, after that he had showed *wonders and signs*, that is, extraordinary miracles and signs of the divine presence and power. *In the land of Egypt:* such were the ten plagues recorded in Exod. iv.-xii. *In the Red Sea*, when it was divided to allow the Israelites to pass through, and then ingulfed their enemies by the returning waters (Exod. xiv.; Ps. cxxxvi. 13-16). *In the wilderness forty years*, where they were miraculously provided with food from heaven, received streams of water from the rock, and witnessed the most extraordinary miracles in the vicinity of Mount Sinai (Exod. xvi. xvii., &c.).

VER. 37. *This is that Moses.* — Here Stephen connects the history of Moses, of whom they boasted, with that of Christ, the great prophet like unto Moses, whom they rejected. Thus he presents the parallel between the rejection of Moses by their fathers, and the rejection of Christ by their nation at the present time. He leaves them to infer that the Christ, whom they had put to death, was that Prophet, was the Messiah, and that there was no real ground for any difference of opinion between them. The prophecy is found in Deut. xviii. 18.

VER. 38. *This is he that was in the church*, — in the assembly, or congregation of Israel, as the word is thus translated in Acts xix. 32. He was the honored mediator of the ancient church in the wilderness.

With the angel which spake to him in the mount. — In Exod. xix. 3, It is stated, when Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive the commandments, that "the Lord called unto him out of the mountain." He called him through his angel, as at Horeb the angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses (ver. 30). In the fifty-third verse we read of the law received by the disposition of angels; and St. Paul (Gal. iii. 19) speaks of the institution of the law, that it was "ordained by angels."

Who received the lively oracles. — The commandments given by God to Moses, and delivered by the latter to the people, are termed lively, or living oracles. Not that they have the power of imparting life where no life had previously existed, but may be said to possess a living power over the conscience, giving to it an increased vitality, or susceptibility to the influences of truth.

VER. 39. *To whom our fathers would not obey.* — Stephen thus holds up before his hearers the mirror of the stubbornness and disobedience of the fathers of the nation, that they may see themselves reflected in it. Notwithstanding Moses had worked mighty miracles in their behalf, carried them through the Red Sea, received from God his holy oracles, and devoted himself to their welfare, yet "*they thrust him from them.*" They disobeyed him, and turned away from his instructions.

In their hearts turned back again. — There was a longing in their hearts after Egypt, and the modes of life to which they had there been accustomed. They even proposed to select a leader and return to Egypt (Num. xiv. 4).

VER. 40. *Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods* (Exod. xxxii. 1). — They asked for idols to worship, such as the Egyptians had. They wished them to go before them, according to the custom of Eastern nations, who carried their idols before them in their journeys and

military expeditions. The reason given was that Moses was so long absent in the mount, "*We wot not what has become of him.*" Their leader is spoken of in a disrespectful manner, and regardless of the great obligations they are under to him.

VER. 41. *And they made a calf.* — In Exod. xxxii. 3, 4, it is said that Aaron made the molten calf. But as they furnished the materials, and it was made under their direction, they are the responsible makers of it. This calf, or image of the bull, was doubtless a symbol borrowed from the Egyptians. The sacred bull (*Apis*) was worshipped as the image of Osiris, the god of agriculture.

And offered sacrifice unto the idol. — This is called by Stephen an idol, though, strictly speaking, it was to the Israelites an image, not of an imaginary or false god, but of the true God. For we are told (Exod. iii. 5), that Aaron "built an altar before it, and made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord." Still any image of Jehovah made by man, and used as the medium of worship, may be pronounced an idol. *They rejoiced in the works of their own hands.* Thus they sinned against their Creator, "by joyfully deifying the works of their own hands, namely, created objects."

VER. 42. *Then God turned and gave them up.* — As a punishment for their disobedience, and apostasy from the worship of the living God, God turned away from them, and gave them up to idolatry. They first turned away their hearts from him; and then he turned himself away from them, and left them under the dominion of absolute idolatry. Thus he punished the apostasy of the Gentiles (Rom. i. 23–25).

To worship the host of heaven. — They were abandoned to star-worship, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. This form of idolatry prevailed in Egypt, Chaldæa, and Phœnicia.

As it is written in a book. — The reference is here to Amos v. 25, 26. The twelve minor prophets, from Hosea to Malachi, in the ancient division of the Scriptures formed but one book, called here "the book of the prophets."

Have ye offered to me sacrifices? — The idea probably is, that, although they had offered sacrifices to Jehovah in the wilderness, they had not been accepted, because of the prevailing idolatry.

VER. 43. *Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch.* — As a rival to "the tabernacle of witness," the Israelites bore along, in their march through the wilderness, the tabernacle or tent of Moloch, the name signifying a sovereign or king. Some suppose that this is the proper name for Saturn among the Phœnicians, with whom Baal means lord. It was the national king of the Ammorites, and most repulsive in appearance. Children were often offered to him in sacrifice. See this horrid practice forbidden in Lev. xviii. 21, xx. 2. Strange as it may seem, Solomon built a temple to this god on the Mount of Olives; and King Manasseh, who yielded to every form of idolatry, made his children pass through the fire in honor of the hideous idol. See 2 Kings xxi. 2–6.

The star of your god Remphan. — In Amos v. 26, the term used for this star-god is Chinn, which is the Arabic name of Remphan, or Rephan. Remphan, in the Coptic, signifies light-giver, king of heaven, and hence is understood the sun. They also made "figures," that is, images and representations of deities that they worshipped. How-

ever they might profess not to worship the image, but the deity represented in it, — as the Papists pretend not to worship the images of the Virgin Mary and the saints, — still the use of all such representations in worship is strictly forbidden (Exod. xx. 4, 5).

I will carry you away beyond Babylon. — In Amos v. 27, the language is, "I will carry you away beyond Damascus." When God threatened to expel the idolatrous people to a distant country, "the original Hebrew, which the Septuagint follows, simply specifies Damascus as the point beyond which they shall be carried. In view, however, of the well-known historical fulfilment of the divine words, Stephen substitutes the name of Babylon for that of the Syrian capital."

VER. 44. *Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness.* — For an account of this costly and sacred tent, made according to divine directions, see Exod. xxv., xxvi. It was also called "the tabernacle of the congregation," or "tent of assembly." Stephen calls it the tabernacle of witness, as the place where God gave evidence, or witness, of his glorious presence (Num. ix. 15); or as containing the two tables of stone, the testimony of God's covenant with the nation.

As he had appointed who spake unto Moses. — The sanctity of the tabernacle is demonstrated by the fact that God designed it, and that it was made "after the pattern which was showed" to Moses in Mount Sinai (Exod. xxv. 9, 40). Though made with hands, it was according with the divine ideal, and was an image or type of heavenly realities (Heb. viii.).

VER. 45. *Which also our fathers.* — The tent, or tabernacle, continued to be the sanctuary, not only in the wilderness, but in Canaan, up to the time of the building of the temple. It was brought in by Jesus (the Greek form of Joshua in the Septuagint). The name of Joshua was originally Oshea (Num. xiii. 8), which signifies "salvation." As the leader of God's people, Joshua was the type of Jesus, as Paul shows in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

Whom God drave out. — The tabernacle with the ark were taken from place to place while God was driving out the Gentiles, until the days of David and Solomon.

VER. 46. *Who found favor before God.* — David being a "man after God's own heart," and hence greatly honored and blessed of God, "desired to find," or asked permission to build, a place, or a fixed shelter, as the original signifies, for the worship of God, in the place of a movable tent (Ps. cxxxii. 5; 2 Sam. vii. 1–4).

VER. 47. *But Solomon built him a house.* — This high privilege was granted to Solomon who, as a prince of peace, as his name imports, and as a son of David, was the type of David's greater Son, and of the divine Prince of peace.

VERS. 48, 49. *Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not.* — Though Solomon built a costly and magnificent temple for Jehovah, still the divine presence and glory could not be restricted to any edifice made with hands. As saith the prophet (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2), "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." The whole creation is the dwelling-place of God. Such a being cannot be confined to any locality. Isaiah, at the close of his gospel prophecy, looking forward to this very period of transition from Judaism to Christianity, predicts this change from temple to universal worship. It is also described in beautiful and glowing language in Mal. i. 11.

VER. 50. *Hath not my hand made all these things?* — Shall the Creator of this magnificent universe, he who lighted every star, and formed every world, and made all material things, be confined to a material structure? Thus Stephen shows not only the reasonableness of his argument, but that the very doctrine that he was charged with, as a profanation of the temple, had all along been taught in the Scriptures; and that the whole design of altars, the tabernacle, and temple, was to teach the Israelites, and through them all nations, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 24).

LESSON III. — October 15.

Stephen's Martyrdom. — Acts vii. 51–60.

51. ¶ Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

52. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53. Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

54. ¶ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58. And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Ver. 51. *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised*, &c. — Stephen suddenly changed the tone of his address. Whether he witnessed a restlessness in his audience, or discovered in their countenances the signs of a gathering storm of indignation and violence, we are not informed. All along, he has been referring to the rebellions of the people (vers. 9, 35, 39, 43), and now he opens upon the rebels before him. The personal application of his doctrines and arguments is bold, direct, and most searching. Instead of his speaking "blasphemous words" against Moses, the temple, and God, they are themselves the guilty party. They are repeating the crimes of their fathers; and the speaker, catching the spirit of the old prophets in the narrative he is giving, lets them know it in language that they cannot misunderstand. The term "stiff-necked" was one that God through Moses often applied to the rebellious and stubborn of his people (see Exod. xxxii. 9, xxxiii. 3–5). In Deut. x. 16, it is associated with an uncircumcised heart. The image is taken from the resistance of oxen that will not bend their necks to receive the yoke. *Uncircumcised in hearts and ears.* — Circumcision, viewed as a rite of consecration to God, is figuratively applied to the heart and the ear, that is, the feelings and the understanding. Uncircumcised hearts and minds are therefore hard and rude, as those of Pagans.

Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost. — The charge which Stephen makes, he applies to the entire people of Israel, in all their successive generations (Isa. lxvi. 10). Lest they might escape the personal and practical force of his words, he adds, "As your fathers did, so do ye."

Ver. 52. *Which of the prophets*, &c. — A strong mode of stating that, as a nation, they were so in the habit of persecuting the holy prophets whom God sent to them, that scarcely any escaped (see 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16; Jer. ii. 30; Matt. xxi. 35, xxxiii. 34, 35). The crimes

of the nation are so glaring and unremitting in this direction, that Christ exclaimed (Luke xiii. 34), "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee!" &c. Those who had foretold the coming of the Messiah had been slain; even Isaiah, the most full and evangelical of them, is said to have been sawn asunder; and now of the "Holy One and the Just," "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of peace," they are "the betrayers and the murderers." The Sanhedrim, by accusing him and placing him in the hands of Pilate, betrayed him; and the Jews, persisting in the cry, "Away with him, crucify him!" were his murderers (Matt. xxvi. 66; Mark xv. 13, 14).

VER. 53. *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels.* — Rather, by the arrangements or orders of angels. Drs. Doddridge and Clark understand the passage to mean ranks, or hosts, of angels, that appeared on Mount Sinai, when the law was given (see Deut. xxxiii. 2). The allusion in Ps. lxviii. 17, to the chariots and angels of God in Sinai, is regarded as bearing upon this view. A simpler reading is, "Ye have received the law *at the appointment of angels.*" In Gal. iii. 19, the law is spoken of as "ordained by angels," and, in Heb. ii. 2, "the word spoken by angels." It is evident that the ministry of angels was employed on that grand occasion; which fact increases the honor conferred upon the people, and renders their disobedience the more heinous.

VER. 54. *When they heard these things.* — When they heard the man whom they had charged with blasphemy, exposing their ungodly sentiments and guilty deeds, they *were cut to the heart.* As one expresses it, "their hearts clave asunder" with the violence of their rage.

They gnashed on him with their teeth. — They were ready to seize him with their teeth, and rend him in pieces. "As a chained dog seizes with his teeth the man that attempts to release him, so wicked men cannot endure the contact of those who desire to deliver them from bondage, and begin to rend them as enemies" (Matt. vii. 6). — *Starke.*

VER. 55. *But he being full of the Holy Ghost.* — While his enemies were yielding more and more to the fire of their infuriated passions, he was filled, by the grace of God, with a heavenly fire. He was full of the Holy Ghost. Instead of looking upon the wild and maddened multitude around him, he looked up with faith and hope to heaven. In an ecstasy of spirit, he gazes upon scenes and objects there, that are only visible to his eye.

Saw the glory of God; that is, the celestial splendor in which God himself appears; *and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* — This is a remarkable statement in regard to Jesus being seen standing, as he is always described by himself (Matt. xxvi. 64), and by the apostles and evangelists (Eph. i. 20; Mark xvi. 19), as *sitting* at the right hand of God. By his standing we must infer that he has risen to receive and welcome to heaven this faithful witness, and first Christian martyr.

VER. 56. *Behold, I see the heavens opened.* — Boldly, and without fear of the consequences, Stephen announces the glorious vision, that fills his whole being with heavenly light and joy, to the darkened souls by which he is surrounded. He sees the heavens opened, even

unto the innermost sanctuary, unto the highest heaven, where stands the throne of the eternal King. Through the opening of "the everlasting doors," he sees the Son of man. Lange says, "It is remarkable that he here applies the name to Jesus, Son of man, which the Saviour so frequently employs, while the four Gospels do not mention a single case in which it was pronounced by another; and neither the evangelists nor the apostles employ it themselves in the Gospels, the Acts, or the Epistles. . . . The employment of it in the present passage is unquestionably an evidence of the historical fidelity of the narrative before us."

VER. 57. *They cried out with a loud voice.* — The exasperation of the hearers had now reached its height. The arguments of Stephen, his sharp denunciations, and now, added to these, his witness to a heavenly vision, and the exaltation and glory of Christ at the right hand of God, were more than they could bear. They shout aloud to drown his voice. They stopped their ears so that they might not hear his supposed blasphemies, and rushed upon him an infuriated mob.

VER. 58. *And cast him out of the city.* — The meeting of the council was brought to a sudden termination by these fanatical proceedings. And without any judicial decision of the case, or action of the Roman procurator, whose permission was necessary in order to inflict capital punishment (John xviii. 31), Stephen was cast out in accordance with the Levitical law (Lev. xxiv. 14), that required that a blasphemer be stoned "without the camp" (compare 1 Kings xxi. 13; Heb. xiii. 12, 13).

And the witnesses laid down their clothes. — The law (Deut. xvii. 7) required that the men who witnessed against a transgressor should cast the first stones on him. In order that they might not be impeded by their outer flowing garments, they laid these aside, at the feet of a young man named Saul. Then they and the rest of the people hurled stones at Stephen. This is the first mention that is made of Saul, afterwards St. Paul. While wicked men are stoning one witness, God is preparing to raise up another, to whom the heavens will open, and the light of whose faith, and the power of whose life, will fill the nations.

VER. 59. *Stephen, calling upon God.* — Two exclamations escaped the lips of the dying martyr. One is for himself, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" "Lord Jesus! Lord Jesus!" This cry is the hope of the believer, the watchword of the Church, the inspiration of all who are faithful unto death. It rings through Christendom. It stirs the hearts of tens of thousands. It fires the hosts of God's elect, in their march to the promised land. It gives strength to "do all things," and bear all things. It opens heaven; and pain and death are forgotten in the immortal glories with which the departing spirit is flooded.

VER. 60. *He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice.* — His second and last petition is for his foes. For them he kneels down. Perhaps his strength is failing, and he must kneel. He speaks in a voice that all can hear. The prayer is a sermon on Christian forgiveness.

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. — How similar to the prayer of Jesus on the cross! — "Father, forgive them" (Luke xxiii. 34). No such example as this can be found in ordinary history. It is purely Christian. It comes alone from a "life hid with Christ in God."

He fell asleep. — Luke here designedly employs a word (occurring in John xi. 11; Acts xiii. 36; 1 Cor. xv. 18, 51) which is in striking contrast with the violent and bloody death. Amid the rage and brutal fury of foes, set on fire of hell, this martyr quietly falls asleep in Jesus. As though rocked by the zephyrs, and undisturbed by the slightest sound, he falls asleep.

"Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep!"

LESSON IV. — October 22.

Simon the Sorcerer. — Acts viii. 9–25.

9. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

10. To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17. Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19. Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.

24. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

The attack upon Stephen was the signal for a general persecution against the Church. The hostility that raged against Christianity, and, to the eye of man, threatened its destruction, only served to invigorate and extend it. The dispersed Christians preached the gospel "in the regions of Judæa and Samaria," thus scattering abroad the seeds of divine truth, while the apostles remained at Jerusalem to labor at this great centre for the Master (Acts viii. 1). As devout men were giving to Stephen an honorable burial, thus testifying to his innocence and godliness, Saul was making havoc in the Church; literally, tearing to pieces, as a wild beast, the Church. Wherever Christians were to be found, he entered their houses, dragged forth the inmates, and committed them to prison (Acts viii. 3). This he could not have done without the aid and sanction of the authorities. But his fiery spirit kindled the wild fanaticism, and was doubtless the soul of the movement, as that nature, afterwards converted and sanctified, was the power for extending the truth among the nations.

Philip, who was a deacon (Acts vi. 5) and an evangelist (Acts xxi. 8), preached the gospel with great success in the (or a) city of Samaria. Here was a mixed race made up of Jews and heathen;

and through them a path was opened beyond Jerusalem (Acts viii. 5, 6). Philip's miraculous power was felt in the casting-out of unclean spirits, as well as in healing diseases (Acts viii. 7). His success created great joy in that city (Acts viii. 8). But the kingdom of darkness soon rallied its forces against the kingdom of light; and we have presented in our lesson the first great conflict between Paganism and Christianity.

VER. 9. *But there was a certain man called Simon.* — Concerning the origin of this man, Luke furnishes us with no information. Neander, Gieseler, and others have conjectured that he was the same Simon of whom Josephus speaks, who was a native of Cyprus, and a Jew. Justin Martyr says that he was a native of Gitta in Samaria. But, whatever doubts hang over these statements, he was unquestionably one of the men who, at that period of general expectation of the appearance of some great divine power, travelled through the country as fortune-tellers, astrologers, and interpreters of dreams, and acquired great influence by their supposed endowment of miraculous healing powers.

VERS. 10, 11. *To whom they all gave heed.* — So successful for a long time were Simon's sorceries, that he gained the confidence of all classes "from the least to the greatest." He was regarded as "the great power of God," somewhat answering to the divine power, that it was expected would be revealed in the coming Messiah. The Fathers say that Simon claimed to be the Logos, the Paraclete, &c.

VER. 12. *But when they believed Philip.* — Under the faith with which they heard the truths taught by Philip, the superstition created by Simon fast melted away. Simon sought only to exalt himself "giving out that himself was some great one" (ver. 9); but Philip never alludes to himself personally, but sets forth Jesus Christ as "the all and in all." The language of St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 5), "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," should be the language of every gospel messenger.

They were baptized, both men and women. — They not only believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they publicly professed their faith by receiving the rite of baptism. Thus did the simple truth triumph over the cunning arts of error. As one says, "The apostolic simplicity of the dove will always triumph in the end over the fascinating influence and the cunning of the serpent. Where God's truth arises, the kingdom of lies must wane."

VER. 13. *Simon himself believed also.* — Simon yielded an intellectual belief to the doctrines he heard; he was baptized; and he "wondered, beholding the miracles and signs that were done;" and yet he possessed no true or saving faith. The renewing power of the gospel did not reach his heart. He heard with his ears the most sublime truths ever spoken; saw with his eyes miracles far above his own sorceries, wrought by the power of God; received the symbol of inward purity and sincere faith; and yet was destitute of spiritual life. Having a name to live, he was dead.

VER. 14. *When the apostles . . . heard that Samaria had received the word of God.* — This news was most unexpected and important. The wonder was, that the Samaritans, who were hostile to the Jews, and into whose cities Christ had first commanded the apostles not to enter

with the gospel message (Matt. x. 5, 6), had become converted to Christianity. They saw that the ancient barriers to the progress of the true religion were now broken down; and they resolved to send two of their number to this new missionary field.

They sent unto them Peter and John. — Since the proposition to elect seven deacons (Acts vi. 3), this is the first measure adopted by the twelve apostles as an organized body of an authoritative ecclesiastical character. For this new mission they select the two most prominent of their number, and those who had wrought the first apostolic miracle (Acts iii. 1). While this appointment conferred distinction upon Peter and John, and was an expression of confidence in their ability and faithfulness, it clearly shows that the appointing power rested with the whole body collectively, and that neither a Peter nor a John was elevated in rank above their brethren. The perfect equality of the apostles as here manifested is a direct refutation of the Romish doctrine of the primacy of the Apostle Peter.

VER. 15. *Who . . . prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.* — Having been converted under the influences of the Spirit, the apostles now pray that they may receive the extraordinary gifts that the Holy Ghost confers upon true believers. They follow up the good work begun by Philip.

VER. 16. *As yet he was fallen upon none of them*, — i. e., in such abundance, and with such visible manifestations, as marked the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. They had been converted and baptized; but there is a higher plain of spiritual blessedness and power yet to be reached.

VER. 17. *Then laid they their hands on them.* — After the intercessory prayer had been offered for all of them, the imposition of hands was the sign of the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the individual upon whom hands were laid. This was not an exclusive apostolic act; for in the very next chapter Luke gives an account of the laying-on of hands by Ananias, who was neither an apostle, nor an evangelist like Philip, but simply a Christian of Damascus. "And Ananias . . . putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized" (Acts ix. 17, 18). There were other mediums beside this, through which the Holy Ghost was communicated with power. (See Acts x. 44–46.)

VER. 18. *And when Simon saw*, &c. — When he discovered this wonder-working power manifested by the apostles, and that it could be transferred to others, he coveted it as a means of gain, regarding it only as a higher sort of jugglery than he had practised. Thinking that the apostles were mercenary men like himself, he offered them money, probably a large sum, for this power. He regarded it as a kind of magic, not dependent upon one's spiritual state, but which could be exercised or transferred at pleasure. From this proposal, the name *Simony* is derived, which is applied to the traffic in divine things. The sale of livings in the Church, the offering or giving of secular advantages for ecclesiastical offices, or Church preferment, come under this term. The sin of Simon was twofold in seeking

from men what God alone could give, and in desiring to obtain for money that which is the free gift of divine grace.

VER. 20. *Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee.* — Peter, filled with holy indignation at such a proposal, instantly consigns the silver, and the man who offers it, to destruction. Had there been any desire on the part of Peter to grant the request, he could not have done it without violating the express command of his Lord, as contained in Matt. x. 8: "Freely have ye received, freely give." Besides, by attempting to sell the gift, he would have lost it himself. Coming from God, it depended upon his spiritual union with him.

VER. 21. *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.* — Thou hast no share in it at all. The insincerity of the sorcerer places him outside of this gift, even far from it. *Thy heart is not right*, is not straightforward in the sight of God. It is perverted and treacherous.

VER. 22. *Repent, therefore*, &c. — Turn from your wicked ways, and pray to God, "if perhaps" thou mayest "be forgiven." Your case is a doubtful one: still there is some ground for hope (Acts xvii. 27; Mark xi. 24).

VER. 23. *For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness.* — The gall of the serpent is considered the seat of its poison; and the influence of Simon in the Church, Peter sees, would be poisonous. He is also in "the bond of iniquity." He is wrapped up in iniquity. His profession and baptism have not freed him from "the snares of the Devil" (see 2 Tim. ii. 26). Hence the necessity of his speedy and radical repentance.

VER. 24. *Simon said, Pray ye to the Lord for me.* — The miserable man had no inclination or faith to pray for himself; but, impressed with the apostles' power with God, he thinks that their prayers may avail for him. He has the spirit of modern Papists, who depend upon the intercession of their ecclesiastical superiors, and are ready to pay money for their prayers. The latter case, however, differs from the one before us, in the equal readiness of the priests to receive the money.

That none of these things come upon me. — Simon desires to be delivered from the consequences of his sins, rather than to be freed from sin by forgiveness and purification. Rudelbach, as quoted by Lange, says, "Thus Simon approached, step by step, that destruction from which there is no deliverance, although, at every step which he took, grace rebuked, warned, and called him; thus his latter end was worse than the beginning (2 Pet. ii. 20). He had received grace; but, in place of applying it conscientiously, he employed it in promoting carnal purposes. The wonderful works of God which he beheld did not fill him with humility, but only tempted and animated anew his arrogant spirit. He sought to acquire a more precious gift than he had already received; but it was his purpose to employ it in destroying the souls of men. The call to repentance reached him, but did not infuse life into his soul; it simply led him to think of the means of escaping the temporal punishment of his sin."

VER. 25. *When they had testified . . . returned to Jerusalem.* — When they had established the new converts in the faith, and raised up teachers endowed with the gifts of the Spirit, they returned to Jerusalem. But on their way they spent much time in preaching

the gospel in many villages of Samaria. They availed themselves of every opportunity to make known salvation to perishing sinners, to testify for Jesus, and extend the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. They set an example worthy of the imitation of all Christian ministers and people.

LESSON V. — October 29.

Philip and the Ethiopian. — Acts viii. 26–40.

26. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.
27. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,
28. Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.
29. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.
30. And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?
31. And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.
32. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:
33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.
34. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?
35. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.
36. And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?
37. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
38. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.
39. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.
40. But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

Ver. 26. *The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip.* — The ministry of angels was a marked feature in the early history of the Church (see Acts v. 19, x. 3, xii. 7, xxvii. 23). The apostles having departed, a messenger from God appears to Philip, to direct him in a new path in accordance with the divine plan for extending Christianity. He is commanded to proceed in a southerly direction, *unto the way that goeth from Jerusalem unto Gaza.* It was not necessary for him to pass through Jerusalem, but simply to strike the road leading to Gaza from that city. Gaza was a very ancient city of the Philistines, mentioned in Gen. x. 19, situated about sixty miles south-west of Jerusalem, and less than three miles from the Mediterranean, near the southern boundary of Canaan. It had frequently been destroyed by war, and as frequently rebuilt. The gates of this city were carried away by Samson (Judg. xvi. 3).

Which is desert. — This clause designates the lonely road that Philip is to take, to accomplish the purpose for which he was sent.

Ver. 27. *And he arose and went.* — No communication had been made to him of the object of this journey. He was simply commanded to "Go;" and, having implicit faith in God, he obeyed. He was to travel an unfrequented, or "desert" road, where he could scarcely expect to meet any travellers. The narrative that follows is

one of the most simple and beautiful that we find connected with the history of missions in the apostolic age. The importance of the events described, as well as the graphic and vivid delineation of them, are calculated to awaken the deepest interest.

And behold a man of Ethiopia. — Philip, who is probably travelling on foot, perceives a chariot occupied by a stranger, who is an Ethiopian. This country, called in the Old Testament Cush, embraced the highlands south of Egypt, or the territories named in modern times Nubia, Kordofan, and Abyssinia. The inhabitants were completely black, or of a swarthy complexion. This Ethiopian was a eunuch, a term that was often used in a different sense from its original, or physical meaning. It was applied to state officers of high rank. This man was the treasurer to Candace queen of the Ethiopians, Candace being the family name of the queens of this country, as was Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. He was doubtless attended by a retinue suited to his rank.

He had come to Jerusalem to worship.—This interesting fact implies that in his African home he had gained a knowledge of the God of Israel, and was led to make a pilgrimage to the holy city to worship him in his temple. He may have been a Jew by birth, or a Jewish proselyte.

VER. 28. *Sitting in his chariot*, &c. — According to a most commendable Jewish custom, he was occupying his time, on his journey, reading the Holy Scriptures. Probably he was furnished with the Greek version prepared in Alexandria, and well known in Egypt and the adjoining countries. "He had gone to see the sanctuary of Jehovah with his own eyes, to visit the holy city, 'to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple' (Ps. xxvii. 4). But he now searches the word of God in order to gaze into the sanctuary of the Lord with spiritual eyes. The word is indeed a true sanctuary. And even when the reader does not clearly and accurately understand the whole . . . his devout and earnest study of it is nevertheless a most blessed employment, which conducts him nearer and nearer to the light."—*Lange.*

VERS. 29, 30. *The Spirit said unto Philip.* — An inward voice from the Holy Spirit that dwelt in his soul commanded him, "Go near and join thyself to this chariot." At once he ran towards the chariot; and as the man was reading aloud to himself, as was the Jewish custom, he perceived that he was reading the words of the prophet Isaiah. Obeying the promptings of the Spirit, he boldly entered into conversation with the distinguished stranger by asking him, *Understandest thou what thou readest?*

VER. 31. *And he said, How can I except some man should guide me?* — The nobleman replies with a candor and modesty that show his readiness to be taught the truth. How little does he dream of the interest felt in him by the God of Israel, whom he has made this journey to worship, and who has sent his angel to guide to him one to explain the prophecies relating to the great Redeemer! Philip, invited into the chariot, takes a seat at his side.

VER. 32. *The place of the Scripture . . . was this.*—It was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the seventh and eighth verses. The quotation differs from the original Hebrew, being taken from the Greek of the Septuagint, with slight variations. It would seem that Philip had

addressed an inquiry to the traveller respecting the subject upon which he had been reading; and the latter replies by showing this passage, and soliciting an explanation.

VER. 33. *In his humiliation*, &c. — Lange says, "The sense which the authors of the Alexandrian version intended to convey in this verse (Isa. liii. 8), is, without doubt, the following: 'In his humiliation occasioned by his enemies, the judgment which impended over him was set aside by God; but with respect to his generation, i.e., his contemporaries, no one can adequately describe their iniquity, for they slew him.'"

VER. 34. *Of whom speaketh the prophet this?* — Such was a very natural and important question, and shows that the eunuch was a thoughtful and interested reader. While at Jerusalem he may have sought light upon these passages without obtaining any that was satisfactory. But God now graciously meets him with a teacher who will lead him from the Old to the New Testament.

VER. 35. *Then Philip opened his mouth.*—He began by interpreting the prophetic passage referred to, and then gladly unfolded the principal facts and most important truths concerning Christ. He must have explained the conditions of salvation, repentance, faith, and baptism in the name of Christ.

VER. 36. *See, here is water.* — The traveller, rejoicing in his new hopes, desires at once to receive the rite of baptism. Dr. Robinson supposes that he discovered the spot where this baptism was administered, on the route from Beit-Jibim to Gaza, on the most southern road from Jerusalem; while others fix the place at Beth-zur, east of the spot designated by Robinson.

VER. 38. *They went down both into the water.* — The new convert, having professed his full and sincere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, received at the hands of the evangelist the solemn rite of baptism. The mode of administering this baptism is not stated. As Hackett says, "The language, or, rather, the preposition in the Greek verb, may refer to the descent from the higher ground to the water." Alexander says, "That they went down *into* the water, can prove nothing as to its extent or depth." If the idea to be conveyed were that they went *under* the water, another preposition would have been used. From the Greek text, and our knowledge of this desert place derived from Robinson and others, the most natural inference is, that, seeing water at the side of the road, they went down, and, stepping into it, Philip sprinkled or poured water upon the eunuch. In the chapter in Isaiah (lii. 15) preceding the one that the eunuch was reading when Philip met him, he may shortly before have read the words, "So shall he sprinkle many nations" (comp. Heb. xiii. 14, 19–21).

VER. 39. *The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.* — As they came up out of the water, Philip suddenly disappeared. As his mission was accomplished, he was miraculously removed by the Divine Spirit, as the prophet Elijah and others had previously been removed.

The eunuch saw him no more. — But he had Christ with him, and he went on his way rejoicing. He pursued his journey on the road to Gaza, feeling as though an angel had met him, left a blessing from heaven, and suddenly departed.

VER. 40. *Philip was found at Azotus*, — or Ashdod, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines, and a seaport between Gaza and Joppa; according to some authorities, about twenty miles north-east from Gaza. Philip, not content with what he had already done for the Master, preached in all the cities through which he passed to Cæsarea. His journey led him through Jabneh (Jamnia), Ekron, Ramah, and Joppa, until he reached Cæsarea, nearly thirty-five miles north of Joppa, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Here we find him many years afterwards in a permanent home (Acts xxi. 8, 9), with his four daughters, who had the gift of prophecy. He is visited by Paul, while on a journey to Jerusalem, who is entertained as a Christian guest.

LESSON VI. — November 5.

Saul's Conversion. — Acts ix. 1–18.

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10. ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord.

11. And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Ver. 1. *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter.* — From the time that Saul consented to the death of Stephen (Acts viii. 1), to this period, his feeling of hostility to Christians appears to have grown in intensity, and at last assumed a most destructive and sanguinary character. He breathes an air impregnated with the very spirit of threatening and slaughter. When a passion like religious fanaticism gains possession of a soul, its natural tendency is to increase in strength until it gains a complete mastery over the feelings, thoughts, and life. Saul lives and breathes to persecute the Church of Christ, and is now ready to enter upon a fresh mission of virulence and cruelty.

Ver. 2. *Desired of him letters to Damascus.* — Heretofore Jerusalem had been the field of Saul's persecutions; but now he feels impelled to persecute the Christians in other regions, even beyond the Holy Land. He goes to the high priest, the president of the Sanhedrim, who was the supreme officer of the highest ecclesiastical court

in Judæa, and whose authority extended to distant cities, for letters of commission to do this work. The name of the high priest cannot be stated with certainty; but it was probably Theophilus, the brother and successor of Jonathan, who succeeded Caiaphas.

Damascus, the ancient capital of Syria, was known in the time of the patriarchs (Gen. xiv. 15), and was inhabited by a large number of Jews, as well as Greeks and Syrians. It lies north-east of Jerusalem, about one hundred and forty miles distant from it, and is remarkable for its "beautiful situation, and for being the centre of a vast trade and important religious influences." Jacobus says, "We came upon it after a hot journey on the desert plain which borders it from the south. From seeing here and there an oasis, one vast ocean of verdure broke upon our view in that surrounding wilderness; and soon we came upon the thick foliage, the bowers of trees, and the rich lawns which skirt the city. And soon in the gardens and vales we saw the secret of all this verdure, in the rushing stream of the Barrada, or Pharphar, which irrigates the plain. The city is built chiefly of stone stuccoed; has two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, of whom seventy thousand are Christians of the Greek and Syrian churches. The mosques, with their glistening domes and spindling minarets, give a very picturesque view to the city. The English hotel is in the street which is yet called "Straight" (ver. 11). The bazaars are extensive, and supplied by caravans with the richest goods from Persia and India. The walls of the city are massive, but have been severely battered in the assaults of Ibrahim Pacha and others. Some of the dwellings of very wealthy Jews were visited by us. As it was the season of Passover, we found their inmates in their richest dress, ladies glistening with diamonds; the men reading their psalters."

Saul has doubtless heard that there were a large number of Christians in Damascus; and he seeks, and doubtless obtains, letters of authority to the officers of the synagogues, who would be ready to aid him in his exterminating work. Since the time of Pompey, 64 B.C., the city had come under the dominion of the Romans, and been attached to the province of Syria.

VER. 3. *As he journeyed, suddenly there shined about him a light from heaven.* — Saul had nearly completed his journey, and was near the beautiful city, when suddenly a light, as powerful and dazzling as a flash of lightning, blazed upon him, and cast him to the ground. It came upon him at midday, and is described by himself as "above the brightness of the sun" (Acts xxvi. 13).

VER. 4. *He fell to the earth, and heard a voice.* — Overcome with terror, he was prostrated by the sudden heavenly appearance. Others have been brought to the earth by the overpowering influence of manifestations of the divine glory. Thus it was with Daniel (see Dan. viii. 17, and x. 8), with Ezekiel (see Ezek. i. 28), and with St. John (see Rev. i. 17). It is apparent from Acts ix. 17, 27, as well as from Saul's own declaration (see 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8), that on this occasion he saw Jesus, as well as heard his voice, and conversed with him.

Why persecutest thou me? — He does not say, Why persecutest thou my church, or my disciples? but, Why persecutest *thou me?* Saul had no idea, that, in persecuting what he deemed fanatical sectaries and apostates from Jewish traditions, he was really persecuting the Lord Jesus Christ.

VER. 5. *And he said, Who art thou, Lord?* — It appears from this question that he did not at first recognize Jesus, although, the moment the appeal was made to his conscience, the thought of his divine presence may have dawned upon him.

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. — The trials, the sufferings, of his disciples are his. They cannot be separated from him: so that, when they are assailed, he is afflicted. "This oneness of Christ with Christians, the communion of life and intimate connection existing between the Lord and believers, — the Church of Christ one body, and the Lord its head, — these lofty truths that belong to our faith, which the mind of the Apostle Paul grasped with more power and distinctness, and which he developed in his discourses and writings with even more fulness, than others have done, are already presented in their general features, or in a germinal state, in the appearance of Jesus to Saul in the vicinity of Damascus." —*Lange.*

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. — This was a proverbial expression in common use among the Greeks and Romans. The word translated "pricks" signifies goads, or sharp iron points, attached to rods used in driving oxen. A stubborn or ill-natured ox, when urged on by the driver, would often kick against the iron points, and thus hurt himself without injuring the driver. The expression, as applied to Saul, simply means that it is utterly futile for him to oppose the progress of Christianity; that he is only injuring himself, and bringing suffering upon his own person.

VER. 6. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* — Trembling with fear and guilt, astonished to find him whom he supposed to be an impostor the true Messiah, he yields at once. He yields up his whole being to Christ. That simple inquiry is the germ of a consecrated life, and a Christian work, upon which millions of Christ's disciples look to-day with the warmest gratitude and admiration. It is the fountain of mighty streams of influence that will flow on forever.

Arise, and go into the city. — Christ, having brought Saul to himself, now directs his steps, as he will all who will commit their ways unto him. The converted man is commanded to go into the city, and there await information from an unknown source as to the Lord's will concerning him.

VER. 7. *The men which journeyed with him stood speechless.* — These were his attendants, probably commissioned by the high priest to aid Paul in the arrest, and delivery at Jerusalem, of the Damascene Christians. In chap. xxvi. 14, it is said that they fell to the ground, and in chap. xxii. 9, that "they heard not the voice of him that spoke." By the expression in this narrative, they "stood speechless," is meant they were speechless, without any intended reference to their posture. They heard the sound of a voice, but did not understand what was spoken, as did Saul. A parallel case in the life of Christ is found in John xii. 28, 29. Saul also saw Jesus, while his attendants did not see him.

VERS. 8, 9. *When his eyes were opened, he saw no man.* — The excessive brightness had temporarily deprived him of his sight; and, though he could open his eyes, he saw nothing. Blind and helpless he was led into Damascus. He expected to enter the city strong with the commission from the high priest at Jerusalem. He enters

feeble in himself, but with another commission from the High Priest in the New Jerusalem.

His blindness continues for three days; and he spends the time in fasting, religious meditation, and prayer. These were the most important days of his whole life, the seed-days of great future harvests. They gave him the opportunity of being alone with his own soul and his God. He could meditate upon the wonderful love and mercy of Jesus in appearing in his divine power to save, rather than to destroy, his persecutor. Thus the blindness sent upon him was not a punishment, but a gift of divine grace.

VER. 10. *There was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias.* — A Christian resident at Damascus, of whom we only know that he was "a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there" (Acts xxii. 12). There is no evidence that he was personally acquainted with Saul until the interview here brought about by a vision from the Lord.

Arise, and go into the street called Straight. — This street called Straight is still well known in Damascus. It runs through the city in a direct line from east to west, and is about three miles long. It is the best and most frequented street in Damascus, and leads to the great bazaars. The site of the house of Judas, and the house of Ananias, in a narrow lane, some two hundred yards to the right of the street called Straight, are still pointed out to travellers. But the traditions respecting them are hardly reliable.

For, behold, he prayeth. — This is the reason given by the Lord for selecting this time for the visit. Saul, being engaged in earnest prayer, needed answers to his petitions, and was in a state of mind to receive spiritual blessings.

VER. 12. *Hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias.* — As Ananias was supernaturally commissioned to go to Saul, in a similar manner Saul was led to expect him. Thus God controls human hearts, and uses human instrumentalities to accomplish his divine purposes.

VERS. 13, 14. *Then Ananias answered, Lord.* — The tidings of Saul's persecutions at Jerusalem had reached the Christians at Damascus, and they naturally stood in fear of him. Besides, they knew that he had come to Damascus with authority to bind all who called upon the name of Jesus. Those who had recently fled from Jerusalem to escape his cruelty may have brought the information.

VER. 15. *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way.* — There is but one course for him to take, and that is to "go," leaving the consequences with the Master. But the Lord calms his troubled mind by assuring him that Saul will no longer injure the Church, but has been selected as a chosen vessel to bear his name, especially to the Gentile world and to kings, and also to the children of Israel. He calls himself an apostle to the Gentiles (see Rom. xi. 13), and refers to his work among the heathen as that to which he was called (Gal. i. 15–17).

VER. 16. *I will show him how great things he must suffer.* — He will make known to him the extraordinary trials and difficulties that are before him in the Christian work to which he is called. He does not say, I will show him how great things he *must do*, but, what great sufferings are before him, for his "name's sake." Special rewards

are promised to those who endure afflictions for Christ's sake. Their faith, courage, and power are increased; and the affliction, that is seemingly "for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv. 17). It is probable that no amount of prosperity and success will carry a redeemed soul to such heights in the heavenly kingdom, as patient suffering for Christ's sake. The crown of martyrdom glistens with most precious gems.

VER. 17. *Putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul.* — Ananias meets him with the gentleness and affection of a brother Christian. He informs him that the Lord, the same Jesus who had appeared to him in the way, had sent him; thus furnishing another proof of a risen and living Saviour. He is sent for two objects: 1st, that Paul might receive his sight; 2d, that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost. It is worthy of remark, that St. Paul does not receive his apostleship from the other apostles, but directly from God, through a private Christian. The miraculous gifts with which he was endowed came not, as he says himself, from man, nor from the laying-on of hands, but from the Spirit of God (see Gal. xi. 12, 15–19). In the use of instruments for the accomplishment of his divine purposes, God confines himself to no order or class in the Church.

VER. 18. *Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales.* — The cure, being thus instantaneous, shows that it was miraculous. By scales here, we do not understand a scaly substance; but he experienced a sensation as if something resembling scales fell from his eyes. This immediately followed the laying-on of hands by Ananias. His sight was at once restored; and he "arose and was baptized." Following the example of the early converts, he at once made a public profession of his faith.

LESSON VII. — November 12.

Saul's Early Ministry. — Acts ix. 19–30.

19. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.
20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God.
21. But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?
22. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.
23. ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:
24. But their laying wait was known of Saul: and they watched the gates day and night to kill him.
25. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.
26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.
27. But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.
28. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.
29. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.
30. *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

Ver. 19. *Then was Saul certain days with the disciples.* — Having been ingrafted in the Church of Christ by baptism, he now enjoys the fellowship of the saints; and his new life is invigorated and refreshed by communion with kindred spirits. He soon takes a journey to Arabia, and spends three years in Damascus and Arabia, previous to going to Jerusalem (see Gal. i. 17, 18).

Ver. 20. *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues.* — After spending a few days with the Christians of Damascus, Saul went to the synagogues, and preached, literally heralded, Christ as the Son of God, the Messiah of the Old Testament, and the Redeemer of the world. Instead of breathing out threatening and slaughter, he breathes out the spirit of mercy and love. Instead of opposing the kingdom of Christ, he gives all the ardor of his nature, and the forces of his being, to its establishment and extension.

Ver. 21. *All that heard him were amazed.* — Well they might be at the sudden and wonderful change that had taken place in the man; at hearing Christ and him crucified proclaimed by the noted persecutor, who had come there to seize the Christians, and *bring them bound unto the chief priests.*

Ver. 22. *Saul increased.* — His natural and spiritual powers were rapidly developed. He increased in zeal and ability, in skill to meet and confound the Jews, and in the selection and presentation of the most powerful arguments in support of Christianity. The same elements of character and labor that marked the whole of his brilliant and successful career, burst forth at the very beginning of his work.

Ver. 23. *The Jews took counsel to kill him.* — At first they looked upon him with astonishment; now they view him with hatred. This

persecution arose *after many days*, probably after his return from Arabia. As the Jews could not refute his arguments, they propose to destroy the preacher, and thus silence him forever.

VERS. 24, 25. *But . . . the disciples took him by night.* — Fortunately, Saul discovered the plot that had been formed to take his life, and that the gates of the city were watched to prevent his escape. By means of a large basket, probably such an one as is used at the East for carrying loads, he was lowered from a projecting window, or the overhanging portion of a house; and thus he escaped from the city. See his own account (2 Cor. xi. 32, 33).

VER. 26. *When Saul was come to Jerusalem.* — See Paul's own condensed account of this first visit to Jerusalem, and the events that preceded it, in Gal. i. 11–18. *They were all afraid of him.* They doubted as to the sincerity of his professions, *and believed not that he was a disciple.* His horrible persecutions were still fresh in their memory; and the remembrance colud not be easily wiped out.

VERS. 27, 28. *Barnabas took him.* — Barnabas was highly esteemed by the disciples (see chap. iv. 36, xi. 22), and was probably personally acquainted with Saul, as both were Hellenists, and had lived only a few hours' sail from each other. Barnabas was a native of Cyprus (chap. iv. 36), and Saul of Cilicia (chap. xxi. 39). Barnabas took Paul, as it were, by the hand, and conducted him to the apostles, and related to them the circumstances of his miraculous conversion, and his subsequent faithful Christian labors. And he was with them, on terms of familiarity and equality, and was treated as a Christian brother. The time he thus spent, he tells us, was fifteen days (Gal. i. 18).

VER. 29. *He spake boldly*, — and disputed against the Grecians. It was natural that he should turn his attention first to those Jews who, on account of their birth in heathen countries, were nearly allied to him, since he was himself an Hellenist, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia. But they resisted his arguments and appeals, and resorted to the usual method, under such circumstances, of silencing him, namely, *they went about to slay him.*

VER. 30. *Which when the brethren knew.* — By this time the suspicions of the disciples had all vanished, seeing the marvellous boldness and ability of the new convert; and they are now brethren warmly attached to Saul. They brought him down to Cæsarea on the coast, and sent him to Tarsus, where he might be safe, and do good among the inhabitants of his native city.

LESSON VIII. — November 19.

Dorcas restored to Life. — Acts ix. 31–43.

31. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

32. ¶ And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33. And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36. ¶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.

37. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

38. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41. And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

42. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

Ver. 31. *Then had the churches rest.* — This was in the year A.D. 40, when Christian congregations are spoken of as existing in the three provinces of Palestine; namely, Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria. Thus rapidly, in spite of persecution and the repeated decrees of the Sanhedrim, had the gospel spread. And the churches had rest, and were edified (literally, built up in the faith). The members walked together in Christian unity, and in the fear of the Lord. They enjoyed the presence and comfort of the Holy Ghost, and increased in numbers, as well as in graces. An harmonious church, under the law of brotherly love, will naturally attract others; while a distracted church will repel them.

Ver. 32. *And it came to pass, as Peter passed through all quarters.* — Luke, leaving for the time the history of Saul, turns to giving a short summary of Peter's labors in his apostolic tour among the churches outside of Jerusalem. In his visitations, he comes to the saints at Lydda, a town in the neighborhood of Joppa, and about a day's journey from Jerusalem.

Vers. 33, 34. *He found a man named Æneas.* — This is a Greek name; and we infer that the man was an Hellenist; and some think that he was a Christian. He seems to have known the Messiah, whom Peter said to him *maketh thee whole.* Peter did not say, "Jesus Christ will, on certain conditions, make you whole." But he brings to him the joyful message that he is cured, and hence bids him, "Arise, and make thy bed." In prompt obedience to the gracious command, the

man immediately arose. The blessed Jesus always gives strength to obey his commands. It is easy to do the most difficult thing for Christ; for he always gives us his help.

VER. 35. *And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron.* — That is, a great number of the inhabitants of these places were induced, by the sudden and miraculous restoration of one who had been so long paralyzed, to turn to the Lord. Saron is the same as Sharon in the Old Testament. It was a very fertile plain, extending from Cæsarea to Joppa; the beauty and richness of which made it celebrated in Hebrew poetry. (See Song of Solomon i. 1; Isa. xxxv. 1, 2.)

VER. 36. *Now there was at Joppa.* — This was a very ancient seaport on the Mediterranean, about forty miles from Jerusalem. Here were landed the immense preparations for Solomon's temple, received from a distance (2 Chron. ii. 16); and thence Jonah took his passage to Tarshish (Jonah i. 3).

A certain disciple named Tabitha. — This was her Aramaic name, corresponding with Dorcas, the Greek name; both signifying "gazelle." The gazelle, distinguished for its slender and beautiful form and graceful movements, is frequently introduced by Oriental writers as an image of female loveliness. This Christian woman abounded in good works, and in generous gifts to the poor.

VER. 37. *She was sick, and died.* — However much she had been esteemed during her life, it was after her death that the Church realized what a treasure they had lost. The last rites were performed with peculiar affection. It was customary to wash the body before embalming. The upper room, either upon or connected with the roof of the house, where she was laid, was usually devoted to religious purposes.

VER. 38. *As Lydda was nigh to Joppa.* — It was about six miles from Joppa. As no apostle had yet raised the dead, it showed great faith on the part of these Christians to send for Peter.

VER. 39. *Then Peter arose and went.* — Arriving at the upper chamber, he found the widows, upon whom the deceased had conferred her gifts, weeping, and exhibiting the garments Dorcas had made.

VER. 40. *Peter put them all forth,* — and was left alone with God. Kneeling down, he offered a fervent prayer to heaven. Being assured what the will of God was, he turned to the body, and said, Tabitha, arise. This was said with faith in the divine power, which alone could raise the dead. *And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up.* All these minute particulars are given of the case, just as a truthful eye-witness would describe the scene.

VERS. 41, 42. *And he gave her his hand.* — As was natural, he offered to assist her to rise up, in the full exercise of her physical powers. To the sorrowing friends he presents her alive. This miracle, becoming generally known in Joppa, leads many to believe in the Lord, by the power of whose name the dead are brought to life.

VER. 43. *He tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.* —The most distinguished man in Joppa, whose fame fills the whole city, and for whose accommodation many would gladly open their doors, chooses to abide with a humble countryman, whose trade is regarded as most despicable. The business referred to was that of preparing skins for various purposes; and was held in dishonor by the

Jews, because it brought one in contact with dead animals. But there is no trade so mean in the sight of the world that may not be made honorable by the exercise of principles, on the part of the tradesman, that are acceptable to God. The house of Simon the tanner, however despised by men, was known in heaven (chap. x. 6), and regarded with interest by the angels of God.

LESSON IX. — November 26.

Peter's Vision. — Acts x. 1-20.

1. There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,
2. *A* devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.
3. He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.
4. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.
5. And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter:
6. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.
7. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;
8. And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.
9. ¶ On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:
10. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.
11. And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:
12. Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.
13. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.
14. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.
15. And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.
16. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.
17. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,
18. And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.
19. ¶ While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.
20. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

Up to this time, the gospel had been preached successively to the Jews and proselytes, the Samaritan and the Ethiopian. Now it is to be carried to the Gentiles resident in Judæa. Peter, who has conquered his prejudices and Jewish scruples, is called of God to prepare a highway for the great Apostle to the Gentiles. The rite of circumcision is no longer needed as an entrance into the kingdom of God. The wider door of grace is thrown open; and whosoever will, Jew or Gentile, may come.

Ver. 1. *There was a certain man in Cæsarea.* — "This city on the coast was at this time the political capital of Palestine, the seat of the Roman procurators, though the government of Judæa was transferred to Herod Agrippa, A.D. 41." Cornelius, a Roman by birth and education, here commanded the Italian band of soldiers, so called to distinguish it from the troops that had been levied in Palestine or Syria. It consisted of native Romans, or at least Italians, and formed the nucleus of the garrison. *A centurion* means the commander of a hundred men.

VER. 2. *A devout man.* — In this verse Cornelius is described as a pious man, fearing God with all his family, and habitually performing acts of charity to the people; that is, the people of Israel. The same word designates the Israelites in ver. 42, and chap. xxvi. 17, 23. He was also a man of prayer, having, doubtless, regular seasons for devotion. He was like the centurion of Capernaum, who also loved Israel, and out of his own means built a synagogue for them (Luke vii. 2–5). The whole narrative leads us to conclude, that Cornelius, though not strictly a proselyte, belonged to a class of his contemporaries who, dissatisfied with the Pagan religion that they had inherited from their fathers, had turned to the faith of Israel, and to the worship of the one true God.

VER. 3. *He saw a vision*, or an apparition. — An angel is seen coming to him, about the ninth hour (three, P. M.), the third hour of prayer, which the devout man may, at that moment, have been observing. The occasion is one of such great importance, — the reception of a Gentile to the Church, and thus opening the door to the Gentile world, — that an angel of God is commissioned to bear a message to Cornelius. The angel is not appointed to be the agent of his conversion by proclaiming to him the gospel, but to convey the command of God that Peter should be called.

VERS. 4–6. *When he looked upon him, he was afraid.* — The unusual and dazzling form before him agitates and alarms him. In reply to his respectful question, the angel informs him that his prayers and alms are always remembered before God; that is, "they have ascended to heaven like the smoke of the sacrifices, so that they *remind* God of thee" (comp. Mal. iii. 16; Neh. xiii. 14, 31). He then commands Cornelius to send for Peter, designating the man at whose house the apostle was a guest.

VERS. 7, 8. *He called two of his servants.* — The centurion promptly obeys. He summons two of his household servants, and a devout soldier, one of his personal attendants; and, having freely communicated to them the extraordinary appearance he had seen, sends them, with the necessary instructions, to Joppa.

VERS. 9, 10. *On the morrow.* — The distance between Cæsarea and Joppa was about thirty-five miles. From the account given, the messengers of Cornelius probably left for Joppa soon after the appearance of the angel, which was at three, P. M. Leaving that evening, they were doubtless approaching Joppa about noon; the hour, twelve o'clock, when Peter went to the housetop to pray. We may easily suppose that Peter, at this hour, should experience hunger. But, while the family of Simon were preparing food, he fell into a trance; literally, an ecstasy fell upon him. In this case it was a supernatural absorption of mind, with the perception of material things suspended, and the soul susceptible only to divine communications (see Acts xxii. 17; 2 Cor. xii. 2).

VERS. 11, 12. *And saw heaven opened.* — While Peter was in this trance, he sees heaven opened, and a vessel in the form of *a great sheet* descending, which was tied at the four corners, and thus let down to the earth. Looking into it, Peter sees all manner of beasts, creeping things, and birds. Animals clean and unclean are here promiscuously brought together.

VERS. 13, 14. *Rise, Peter, kill, and eat*, and thus satisfy your hun-

ger. *Peter said, Not so, Lord.* — He revolts at the idea as contrary to all his religious sentiments and practice (see Lev. xi. 4, 13, 23; Deut. xiv. 3–8).

Ver. 15. *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.* — "Although the distinction which God had made in the ceremonial law, between things clean and unclean, has been abolished, so that in the new covenant all things are pure to the pure (Tit. i. 15), the distinction which God has made in the moral law, between things clean and unclean, nevertheless remains in force."

Vers. 17–20. *While Peter doubted in himself.* — While Peter is in a state of perplexity, and is endeavoring to understand the meaning of the vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrive, and are standing at the gate of Simon's house, inquiring whether Peter lodged there. How clearly we see God's hand in every stage and movement of this interesting and important scene! While the three messengers are on their way to Joppa, God orders all the circumstances necessary to their reception, and also prepares Peter's mind for their coming. As in the case of Saul and Ananias, each receives a vision, that prepares one for the other (see Acts ix. 10–12).

Peter, following the directions of the Spirit, goes down to meet the men. They explain the object of their visit, and are invited in, and hospitably entertained. On the morrow Peter went with them to Joppa, and certain brethren accompanied him (vers. 22, 23). From the house of Simon the tanner, a man engaged in an "unclean trade," as viewed by the Jews, the first missionaries to the Gentiles go forth, to bear the gospel of the Son of God, that will purify, exalt, and bless all, of every tribe and nation, who will receive it to their hearts.

LESSON X. — December 3.

The Gentiles Received. — Acts x. 34–48.

34. ¶ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;
35. But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.
36. The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all):
37. That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;
38. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.
39. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:
40. Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly;
41. Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.
42. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead.
43. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.
44. ¶ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.
45. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.
46. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,
47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?
48. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

In the last lesson we left the missionaries starting from Joppa. After passing one night on the road, they arrive the next day at Cæsarea, and find Cornelius and his kinsmen and friends, whom he has invited to share in the coming blessings, waiting to receive them (ver. 24).

As Peter enters the house, Cornelius, regarding him as a superhuman being, and not influenced by mere courtesy, falls down and worships him. Peter very properly resists such homage (vers. 25, 26). The pope, who claims to be the successor of St. Peter, permits such adoration of himself, and thus profanely puts himself in the place of God. See 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

After mutual explanations (vers. 27–33) Cornelius prepares for Peter's address by the following pious words: "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (ver. 33).

Vers. 34, 35. *Then Peter opened his mouth.* — This expression indicates that important truths are about to be announced. The first is the deep conviction on the apostle's mind, that God is no respecter of persons, but that all men, without regard to national distinctions, may be received into the kingdom of God, provided they fear him and obey his commands.

Vers. 36, 37. *That word ye know.* — Peter takes it for granted that Cornelius and his friends have some knowledge of Christ, and of the

elementary principles of Christian faith. No reference is here made to the prayers or alms of the centurion. They are swallowed up in the deep ocean of Christ's righteousness. The goodness of this devout man is for the time lost sight of, in the glory that streams over all nations from the Son of God.

VER. 38. *Jesus of Nazareth.*— This is the name at first pronounced in derision, that has risen, and is now above every name. It is a name that brings peace to the soul, that carries with it infinite power and infinite love.

VERS. 39–41. *And we are witnesses.* — The apostles were raised up, qualified, and sent forth to be witnesses of all the works of Christ, and of the great fact of his resurrection from the dead. Their testimony was abundantly confirmed by signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Heb. ii. 4). They present the evidences of the resurrection, furnished not to the outside world of unbelievers, but only to his chosen disciples (Matt. xxi. 44; Luke xxiv. 43; John xxi. 12–17).

VER. 42. *He commanded us to preach.* — See Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. The apostle Peter doubtless now begins to see and feel the full force of the Redeemer's last commission, to "go and teach all nations." He also feels under solemn obligations to testify that Christ *is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge* of the living and the dead. The solemn fact of a judgment to which we are all hastening is presented to show the dignity and power of the Judge who will render to every man according to his deeds.

VER. 43. *To him give all the prophets witness.* — The Old Testament is full of types, symbols, ceremonial services, and direct predictions, relating to the coming Messiah as the Saviour of sinners. They all point to the fact that through his name whosoever believeth shall be saved. With these predictions of the prophets of Israel, Peter assumed that his hearers were somewhat acquainted.

VERS. 44, 45. *While Peter yet spake these words,* — and before he had concluded his discourse, — *the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.* — We do not infer that there was any visible manifestation of the descent of the Spirit, though the effects were most marked and convincing. The Jews who had come with Peter, and who clung to the idea that the path to the Christian Church was through Judaism by circumcision, were astonished to find *that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

VER. 46. *For they heard them speak with tongues.* — This was proof that could not be resisted. With the gift of tongues they magnified and praised God for his grace. Thus was the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles broken down, and now the mighty river of salvation would flow to all nations.

VERS. 47, 48. *Can any man forbid water?* — If these men have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we, who, asks Peter, can refuse water, so that they shall not be baptized? This is the first instance in which the reception of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit preceded baptism; and its design was to remove all hesitation on the part of the Judæan Christians respecting the reception of believing Pagans, and the propriety of immediately administering baptism to them. Peter accordingly gives directions that they "be baptized in the name of the Lord." He did not himself administer the rite, but assigned the duty to some one of the Christians in the company.

One reason may have been to commit these brethren in the matter, for their future guidance.

Peter, being urged to tarry, remained certain days, and even sat at the table with the uncircumcised (see ch. xi. 3). During this visit, he doubtless gave to the new converts further instructions respecting the Christian faith and life.

LESSON XI. — December 10.

Spread of the Gospel.—Acts xi. 19–30.

19. ¶ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.
20. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.
21. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.
22. ¶ Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.
23. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.
24. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.
25. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:
26. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
27. ¶ And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.
28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.
29. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa:
30. Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

The conversion and baptism of Cornelius soon became widely known, and created a sensation in the Church. On Peter's return to Jerusalem, the Jews, who clung to the rite of circumcision, *contended with* him, and opposed the course he had pursued. It is said by one of the fathers, that Cerinthus, who was afterwards a prominent heretic in Asia Minor, and against whose denial of Christ's divinity John is said by some to have written his Gospel, was active in exciting opposition against Peter. It is clear, that, in the early Church, Peter was not regarded as supreme and infallible. One of the most serious charges brought against him was, that, contrary to Jewish usage, he had placed himself on a social equality with the Gentiles by eating with them. He vindicates his conduct by reciting to them the particulars of the case, and showing the divine authority under which he acted. Facts, in his estimation, are the best arguments. They are convinced by his statement and appeal. "What was I," said he, "that I could withstand God?" When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God (vers. 1–18).

Ver. 19. *Now when they were scattered abroad.*—Luke now resumes his account of the Christians, who became fugitives in consequence of the persecution that raged against Stephen, and afterwards became general against thew hole church. In the providence of God, who causes "the wrath of man to praise him," this movement led to the establishment of the first Gentile church at Antioch in Syria, that was the mother church of the Gentile Christians. This dispersion occurred about A. D. 37; but it is not certain how soon the

fugitives reached Antioch, nor how soon afterwards Barnabas was sent down to them.

Travelled as far as Phenice. — This was a province of Syria, on the Mediterranean coast, including the great cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut. The borders of this region had been visited by our Lord (Matt. xv. 21).

Cyprus. — The famous island in the Mediterranean, opposite the Phœnician coast, noted for its fertility, commerce, and the luxury of its inhabitants. Here Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel; and the seaports Salanus and Paphos are mentioned in Acts xiii. 5, 6. Many Jews settled here, and had their synagogues. *Antioch*, the capital of Syria, situated on the River Orontes, was a very large and celebrated city of antiquity. Many Jews settled there because of the civil and religious freedom granted by Seleucus its founder. Probably the early Christians enjoyed the same freedom, and hence collected there in large numbers, and established their worship.

Preaching the word to none but the Jews. — These Christian Jews, who were not yet enlightened in regard to the full object of the gospel, did not feel at liberty, at that time, to offer its blessings to the Gentiles.

VERS. 20, 21. *Some of them . . . spake unto the Grecians.* — While others preached only to the Jews, private Christians, natives of the island of Cyprus, and of Cyrene in Africa, preached to the Grecians or Gentiles. This was a new feature in Christian work, that unofficial disciples should go forth as preachers of the gospel. While the order and stability of the Church require the divinely appointed ministry, all Christians, in their several spheres, are required to be publishers of the glad tidings of salvation. *And the hand of the Lord was with them;* and under the power of his Spirit many were convicted and converted.

VERS. 22–24. *Then tidings of these things came* to the church at Jerusalem, which was still the mother church, and the seat and centre of the home and foreign missionary work. Barnabas, a layman, is sent to Antioch as an apostolic missionary. He was an Hellenistic Jew, a native of Cyprus, and was thus fitted to labor with "the men of Cyprus," who were already actively engaged in the work. On his arrival, he rejoiced to see the fruits of God's grace; and at once "he exhorted them all, that, with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord." Being a devoted Christian, and full of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, many "were added unto the Lord."

VERS. 25, 26. *Then departed Barnabas to seek Saul.* — In chap. ix. 27 we have an account of Barnabas introducing the converted Saul to the apostles in Jerusalem, and vouching for him; and now thinking of him as fitted to labor in this new field, because he knew that he was a faithful worker, and that God had commissioned him as a preacher of the gospel to the Gentiles, he brings him from Tarsus to Antioch. Thus "he established an organic communication between him and this congregation of Gentile Christians, the future history of which promised to be so rich in events, and which converted Antioch into the metropolis of Gentile Christianity." For a year they labored together in the assemblies for public worship, and instructed the people. In this city of Antioch, where the Gentile church was first established, the disciples were first called Christians. They did not

assume this name, as it is used only twice in the New Testament beside this, and in a way to imply that it was a term of reproach (chap. xxvi. 28; 1 Pet. iv. 16). It could not have been given by the Jews, for they would not thus have acknowledged the Messiahship of Jesus, by applying the term Christ, or Messiah, to the hated sect. The name was given by Pagans, and is historically important "as an evidence that at this point the Church of Christ is entering the sphere of general history, and that the Judæan Christians are becoming commingled with Gentile Christians as one body."

VERS. 27, 28. *In these days came prophets,* — men inspired to declare and expound the will of God; and, in some instances, to predict future events. They are referred to in chap. xiii. 1, xv. 32, xix. 6. Agabus was one who predicted a great famine "throughout all the world." The word here rendered *world* is often used for a particular country, and may here refer to Palestine or the Roman empire. During the reign of Claudius Cæsar, which began A. D. 41, there were four famines. During the fourth, many persons died in Judæa.

VER. 29. *Then the disciples determined to send relief.* — This beneficent movement showed the love of the first Gentile church towards the Jewish Christians, and was calculated to bind them closely together in fraternal affection. They gave according to their ability (1 Cor. xvi. 2), and may have adopted the principle practised at the beginning (chap. ii. 44).

VER. 30. *And sent it to the elders.* — The elders here are abruptly mentioned, without any statement of the mode in which they came into office. J. A. Alexander says, "The office of presbyter, or elder, was the only permanent, essential office of the Jewish church, and as such was retained under the new organization, without any formal institution, and therefore without any distinct mention in the history, such as we find afterwards in reference to the organization of the Gentile churches, where the office had no previous existence, and must therefore be created by the act of ordination" (see chap. xiv. 23).

LESSON XII. — December 17.

Peter's Release. — Acts xii. 1–17.

1. Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.
2. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.
3. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)
4. And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.
5. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.
6. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.
7. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.
8. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.
9. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.
10. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.
11. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews.
12. And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.
13. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.
14. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.
15. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.
16. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished.
17. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Ver. 1. *About that time Herod the king.* — That is, about the time that Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem with the alms collected in Antioch (A.D. 44). Herod Agrippa, first grandson of Herod the Great, began the second persecution at Jerusalem. From Caligula he received the tetrarchy of Philip; afterwards obtained Galilee, Peræa, Samaria, and Judæa; so that now he held the title of king of Palestine. Residing at Jerusalem, the Christian congregation in that city was exposed to his persecutions.

Ver. 2. *He killed James*, — brother of John, and one of the sons of Zebedee, and one of the three admitted to Christ's special intimacy. It is surprising that such a brief record is given of the martyrdom of the Apostle James, while we are furnished with such full details of the death of Stephen. This James, too, is the only apostle whose death is recorded in the Scriptures. He was the first of the twelve who died, while John was the last.

VER. 3. *Because he saw it pleased the Jews.* — From the day of Pentecost to the first persecution, under which Stephen was killed, the popular feeling was in favor of the Christians. Now the tide has turned; and Herod moves with it. He next aims at Peter, who is very prominent in the work of the Church.

Then were the days of unleavened bread, — the seven days immediately following the paschal supper; and so called, because the bread eaten during this time must be unleavened bread.

VER. 4. *When he had apprehended him.* — Among the Jews it was deemed unlawful to execute criminals on feast-days; and therefore Peter, having been seized, was imprisoned, and guarded by four quaternions. A quaternion was a company of four, that served as a guard for three hours, and then were succeeded by another company of four. Two watched at the door of the prison, and two were in the prison with Peter. King Herod was determined to hold his prisoner as securely as possible; intending after Easter, rather after the Passover, to bring him forth for execution. The word "Easter" is an ecclesiastical term of later days, and should not have been employed here.

VER. 5. *Prayer was made without ceasing for him.* — Not in public assemblies, for it was not safe to meet thus; but in private houses, one of which was Mary's (ver. 12). These earnest prayers continued to be offered up during all the days of unleavened bread.

VER. 6. *And when Herod would have brought him forth.* — The very night before the king intended to execute Peter, the prisoner was quietly sleeping *between two soldiers, bound with two chains.* It was the Roman custom to chain a prisoner to a guard, fastening the right wrist of the prisoner to the left wrist of the soldier. In this case, however, the prisoner was chained to two soldiers, or a double guard, for greater security. For a prisoner to escape was death to Roman guards. The apostle thus sleeping affords a beautiful image of Christian faith, that can repose on God in the gloom of a dungeon, and amid the terrors of anticipated death.

VER. 7. *Behold, the angel of the Lord came.* — What are dungeons, chains, quaternions indefinitely multiplied, King Herod, and the Roman empire, now? The angel of the Lord changes all. He has come from the highest court. *A light shined in the prison.* "Unto the upright there ariseth a light in the darkness" (Ps. cxii. 4). The angel smote Peter, and raised him up; and his chains fell off from his hands. They were not wrenched off, but slipped from his hands, without disturbing the guard.

VER. 8. *Gird thyself.* — Naturally bewildered by being thus suddenly aroused, and seeing the strange light in the dungeon, he is commanded to gird on his coat, or under-garments. *Bind on thy sandals. Cast thy garment about thee* (the cloak or upper garment), a loose robe thrown over the shoulders. *Follow me.* — "In such graphic minuteness of detail we have a charming mark of reality; while the rapidity and curtness of the orders, and the promptitude with which they are obeyed, betoken the despatch that was necessary." — *D. Brown.*

VER. 9. *But thought he saw a vision.* — The deliverance was so sudden, unexpected, and supernatural, that Peter seemed to himself to be dreaming. He could not realize the divine care and love that had been manifested towards him.

VER. 10. *When they had passed the first and second ward.* — What a fulfilment of the promise in Isa. xlv. 2! — "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."

VERS. 11, 12. *When Peter was come to himself.* — When he had time to consider and realize his situation, the truth flashed upon him, that the Lord had sent his angel, and delivered him. He directs his steps to the house of Mary, where many were gathered together, praying. It was the earnest and persevering prayers of those Christians that had secured his miraculous deliverance.

VERS. 13–15. *As Peter knocked at the door of the gate.* — Oriental houses, as at this day, had a door on the street, opening into the vestibule, or porch, and attended by a maid, or portress, whose duty it was to *hearken* when one knocked, to learn who was there, and obey the call. Rhoda the maid-servant, recognizing Peter's voice, is so overcome with excitement and joy, that, without stopping to open the door, she runs back to tell the assembled Christians that Peter is at the gate. She was doubtless a Christian herself; and under the fraternal equality that, in the primitive Church, existed between servants and masters, she felt free to follow her religious impulses, and make others partakers of her joy. The Christians feared that she had lost her senses. But she re-affirmed *that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel*, or his ghost. Some interpret the words, It is his guardian angel. The Jews believed that every good person had a guardian angel over them.

VERS. 16, 17. *But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace.* — Peter feared that the brethren might express their astonishment so loudly as to expose him to danger. He therefore makes a sign, that they may listen in silence to an account of his deliverance. The James here spoken of is James the Less, the son of Alpheus; the other having been recently put to death by Herod (ver. 2).

And he departed and went into another place. — Whither he went is unknown; and here the narrative of his labors breaks off. In chap. xv. he is spoken of as being at the synod in Jerusalem. There is no evidence that Peter ever went to Rome, but much proof to the contrary.

In the morning there was great excitement and inquiry among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. Probably not having a suspicion of his miraculous deliverance, and being unable to account for him, they were put to death (vers. 18, 19).

This scene illustrates the power of earnest prayer, the care exercised by the heavenly Father over his children, and the utter weakness of human devices and forces when arrayed against Omnipotence.

THE END.

FROM

DODD AND MEAD'S

SUNDAY-SCHOOL ANNUAL.

INTRODUCTORY.

THIS ANNUAL CONTAINS:

An Article by OUR READER on Sunday School Books.

An Article by REV. CHAS. S. ROBINSON, D. D., on Sunday-School Libraries, entitled "*The Clamor about Books.*"

An Article by REV. JOHN HALL, D.D., entitled "*Sabbath-School Books—How to get and how to use them.*"

An Article by REV. LYMAN ABBOTT, author of Jesus of Nazareth, &c., entitled "*Sabbath-School Libraries.*"

An ALPHABETICAL LIST of all SUNDAY-SCHOOL BOOKS published during the years 1872–73–74.

A LIST OF BIBLE AIDS FOR TEACHERS—on such topics as Geography and Antiquities—Commentaries on the Old and New Testaments, &c. &c. &c.

A Catalogue of DODD & MEAD'S publications, including their standard and miscellaneous books, juvenile and Sunday-School books, &c.

The Catalogue of Library books has been carefully compiled with strict regard to accuracy and completeness,

and includes about *one thousand* volumes, published expressly for Sunday-Schools by the following societies and publishers:

Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society.
American Sunday-School Union.
American Tract Society, New York.
American Tract Society, Boston.
Presbyterian Board of Publication.
Bible & Publishing Society.
Methodist Book Concern.
Evangelical Knowledge Society.
Lutheran Board of Publication.
National Temperance Society.
Reformed Church Board of Publication.
Episcopal Sunday-School Union.
R. Carter & Brothers,
Henry Hoyt.
J. C. Garrigues & Co.
Alfred Martien.
A. F. Graves.
Henry A. Young & Co.
A. D. F. Randolph & Co.
D. Lothrop & Co.
T. Nelson & Sons.
Perkinpine & Higgins.
E. P. Dutton & Co.
J. P. Skelley & Co.
London Religious Tract Society.
Dodd & Mead.
Western Tract Society.
Warren, Broughton & Wyman.

AND BY SOME SIX OR EIGHT SMALLER HOUSES.

While containing none but books published expressly for Sunday-Schools, this Catalogue is not designed to be a selected list, but only to furnish a perfect and complete record of the current Sunday-School literature, that our friends, in making selections, may be assured of having a choice from *all that can be offered.*

Sunday School Libraries.

Messrs. DODD & MEAD

WOULD announce, that they have had all of the books mentioned in this Catalogue read by a thoroughly competent person, and an analysis of each book prepared, in which the following points are fully elaborated, viz.:

The grade of the book, according to merit; as A. B. C. D.

The aim of the book; as for instance, to teach perseverance in well-doing.

The style in which it is written; whether natural, simple, stilted, &c.

The religious character of the story.

Whether it is interesting or not, and why.

An outline of the chief incidents of the story.

And finally, the size of the book in pages.

To give a more clear idea of what these analyses consist, four have been printed and appear on the following pages. They are, of course, not for publication; but with them as a guide, Messrs. DODD & MEAD claim that they are in a position to make a selection of books for a Sunday-School Library as nearly perfect as is possible. All libraries are selected under the personal supervision of one of the members of the firm, and complete satisfaction is guaranteed in every instance.

To those who prefer to make a selection for themselves they would say that they will furnish every facility for a personal examination of any book desired; that their stock is of the fullest and most carefully selected, and that all the new books are added as fast as issued.

Accommodations will be furnished so that Superintendents or Committees can at leisure and without interruption examine the books, having before them the issues of all the Religious publishing houses in this country.

To those who find it inconvenient to visit the city, we will send a selection of the latest and best books, amounting to considerably more than the sum to be expended, from which selection can be made, and the remainder returned at our expense. In such cases, a catalogue of books already in the library, or the date of the last purchase, should be furnished to avoid sending duplicates. This plan meets with general approbation.

THE USUAL DISCOUNTS ALLOWED. Those who may be tempted by offers of extra discounts, will do well to bear in mind that a small saving in amount is poor economy, when effected by selecting from an inferior and limited assortment.

We offer a full assortment, selected from all sources, thus giving every opportunity for making the best selection that can be obtained.

Correspondence invited.

DODD & MEAD,

(SUCCESSORS TO M. W. DODD),

762 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

Year, 1872 Grade, A

Name, Soldiers and Servants of Christ

Pub'r, T. Nelson & Sons No. Pages,

Aim, To give a sketch in popular form of Church History.

Style. Natural.

Rel. Char.. Excellent.

Interesting? Decidedly

Plot, The story begins with the persecutions of the Early Christians by the Romans Emperors and following down the centuries, sketches briefly the various events and changes relating to the Christian Church that happened in each; giving an account of the various missionary enterprises in different lands and their varied success; of the overrunning of great portions of Christian lands by the Mahometans &c down to the more familiar events of the 17th & 18th Centuries.

The book is written in a most fresh and charming manner.

Year, 1872 Grade, B-

Name, Father Merrill

Pub'r, W. B. & Wyman No. Pages, 410

Aim, To Teach that "All things work together for good to them that love God.

Style, Pleasant

Rel. Char.. Good -

Interesting? Quite.

Plot, An old farmer becomes security for a friend and on his failure is obliged to sell his home. He and his wife bear their misfortunes very cheerfully, even assisting the man who has ruined them and utterly refusing to evade the law in any way. They are forced to move to a smaller place and to live in a much humbler way but their opportunities for doing good are so much increased by the change that they see plainly that what they took for misfortune was really a blessing in disguise.

Year, 1872 Grade, C.

Name, Nick Hardy

Pub'r, H. A. Young & Co No. Pages, 375-

Aim. To teach the value to a young man of self-reliance, energy and correct principals.

Style. Animated but unpolished

Rel Char. Fair

Interesting? Moderately.

Plot. Nick Hardy is a poor boy who determines to obtain an education. He has to depend entirely upon his own exertions for support and earns wood to help himself. At first he is looked down upon on that account, but his thorough independence soon gains him the respect of all. He comes out victorious over the usual temptations of school life and the story leaves him on the high road to success. The book is made up to a great extent of scenes in boy life some of them not particularly refined and the author at times seems trying to be funny without much success.

Year, 1872 Grade. D

Name, Richard Petels

Pub'r, Graves & Ellis No. Pages,

Aim, To show that "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city"

Style, Pretentious.

Rel. Char.. Sensational in the Extreme

Interesting? Yes.

Plot, A school boy in a fit of temper knocks down a school mate and believes he has killed him. In his first fright he runs away and although in a country where he has lived for many years, works on a farm undiscovered. He afterwards goes on a whaling voyage, is attacked by Pirates, is left on a Desert Island and taken up by a homeward bound vessel in which he performed prodigies of valor. He finds on his return that his school mate is well and he returns to his own home.

H 113 82



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Sept. 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16056
(724) 779-2111

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



MAR 82
N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA 46962

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 062 915 4